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Longer Poems of To-day

SELECTED AND WITH AN INTRODUCTION
AND NOTES

BY

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NOTE

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Every Thing. Mr. Harold Monro and The Poetry Bookshop.

The Birds. Mr. J. C. Squire.

Retrogression. Sir William Watson.

Song of the Larks at Dawn. The Executors of Herbert Trench and Messrs. Jonathan Cape Limited.

INTRODUCTION

Twentieth-century poetry, it is commonly thought, is remarkable, so far, for its lyrical work—a few great efforts like Dr. Bridges' *Testament of Beauty* and Mr. John Masefield's narrative poems being for the moment set aside. So widespread is this belief that there seems room for a collection designed to show that the poets of our day often occupy themselves successfully with themes that cannot be put into the narrow frame of a lyric, that they are capable of more sustained flights in the realm of the imagination than the general reader of contemporary poetry might allow.

One can go further, indeed, and assert that the relative proportion of longer verse is growing as decade after decade of the new century passes, that the longer poem is coming more and more into its own, and that what contemporary poets need is fuller recognition and appreciation of work into which they have put experiences of such depth and gravity that only extended expression can give due force to them.

It is difficult to find or invent an entirely successful name for such poems, since they are neither very short nor very long, but vary in length between the usual limits of a lyric, on the one hand, and, say, the

shortest book of the *Odyssey* or of *Paradise Lost*, on the other. To this category belonged, in former times, ballads, odes, and elegics, and it was possible to array such either along with the epic, if this term was allowed to cover all narrative poetry, or with the lyric, if this was considered to include all poems of reflection. Milton, however, had early created, in *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, a poem-form which was growing too big to be called a lyric, and Browning invented the dramatic monologue, which was neither epic, lyric, nor drama, but contained elements of all three.

While, therefore, the old Greek names of poem-forms remain, they have become abstractions which no longer apply singly to many poems which are written to-day. We cannot say of most of the poems contained in this volume that they are either purely lyrical or purely epic: they are mixtures of the two kinds, being both epic and lyrical in varying proportions, according as the author is more interested in his story or in his own reactions to it. Specimens might also have been given of the dramatic lyric and dramatic epic of our century, but considerations of convenience forbade.

There are here included poems which contain a story and poems which do not, some which let us directly into the poet's thoughts and some which interpose a slight screen of incident between ourselves and him; in short, there are poems narrative, autobiographical, critical, reflective, or descriptive, or a blend of any of these and not, therefore, truly described by any of the old accepted literary names. The characteristic which they have in common relates to length rather than to content or attitude, and though even the

measure of length is elastic, it does effectively distinguish all these poems from the pure lyric, on the one hand, and the pure drama or epic, on the other.

The covering name chosen for them, therefore, is "Longer Poems", which means poems of between 50 and about 400 lines, each being complete in itself, i.e. not part of a longer poem. If the word were sanctified by literary use, the poems might best have been called "longish".

It is possible to classify this poetic material, with a certain degree of accuracy, according to the direction or attitude of the poet with regard to the subject-matter of his poem. That is to say, the poet's mind may be turned in upon itself, or turned outward upon the march of human events—the old distinction of subjective and objective. The objective attitude, again, may be coloured by either of two moods: a mood of interest in a story for its own sake, or a mood of criticism in which the story is used to express a definite view-point on human affairs.

According to these differences of poetic attitude it is possible, then, to distinguish three kinds of longer verse: firstly, poems autobiographical in character, that is, such as display the poet's interest in the functioning and development of his own mind; secondly, poems historical, being those in which the poetic mind narrates matters taken from the outside world for the sake of some particular wonder or other emotion which they excite; thirdly, poems critical and reflective, viz. those in which themes are taken from the outside world with the purpose or tendency of demonstrating imperfections in the ways of life.

Merely intellectual distinctions such as these cannot, however, divide the body of poetry. They do no more than indicate its several members, and there must be poems here and there which partake of the nature and functions of more than one member or "class". Thus, the poem by W. H. Davies might by some be called "historical"; there are some, also, who would prefer to call *The Old Angler* a "critical" rather than an "historical" poem. Finally, the two poems by Bridges and Trench, respectively, might better be classed as simply "descriptive", but, to avoid making a fresh small group, they have been placed among the poems with which they seem to be most closely allied.

That contemporary poets, like those of all ages, still love a story best for what it tells, without ulterior considerations of self-revelation or censure, is proved by the overwhelming relative size of the "historical" group. And within this group what diversity in the ways of telling a story! On the one hand, here is the old ballad refurbished by Noyes and Chesterton: on the other, here are narratives difficult to describe technically but expressive, each, of a poetic temperament different from all the rest, so that the poems of Bottomley, Armstrong, Graves, and Mary Webb here given might be geometrically described as sides of a square, each author differing so from the other in emotional colour and intellectual tendency yet all together enclosing a fair field of poetic experience of definite shape and self-consistency.

Similarly, with the groups included here under the headings "The Poet" and "Reflections", the interest lies in the resemblances and differences between one

poetic mind and outlook and another, and these two groups, by their natures, allow these differences and resemblances greater play than does the group called "History and Legend". Thus, what an apparent contrast between Nichols and Binyon in their night thoughts; what a gulf between the temper of mind and interests of D. H. Lawrence and those of Harold Monro!

There is no pretence here that any author selected from is "represented" by the poem selected from his works, nor can the whole book arrogate to itself the claim of "representing" contemporary poetry, except to a very limited extent. Here are some twenty poets of our day who have had visions, from time to time, of reality in life, or perhaps it would be better to say of realities underlying the show of things, and, though the English give tardy enough recognition to their poets, these are poets who have won some of the recognition due to them from even their contemporaries, and are likely to be classics, already mastered, on the shelves of the next generation.

EDWARD PARKER.

I. The Poet

THERE IS A HILL

There is a hill beside the silver Thames,
Shady with birch and beech and odorous pine:
And brilliant underfoot with thousand gems
Steeplly the thickets to his floods decline.

 Straight trees in every place
 Their thick tops interlace,
And pendent branches trail their foliage fine
 Upon his watery face.

Swift from the sweltering pasturage he flows:
His stream, alert to seek the pleasant shade,
Pictures his gentle purpose, as he goes
Straight to the caverned pool his toil has made.

 His winter floods lay bare
 The stout roots in the air:
His summer streams are cool, when they have played
 Among their fibrous hair.

A rushy island guards the sacred bower,
And hides it from the meadow, where in peace
The lazy cows wrench many a scented flower,
Robbing the golden market of the bees:
 And laden barges float
 By banks of myosote;
And scented flag and golden flower-de-lys
 Delay the loitering boat.

And on this side the island, where the pool
Eddies away, are tangled mass on mass
The water-weeds, that net the fishes cool,
And scarce allow a narrow stream to pass;
 Where spreading crowfoot mars
 The drowning nenuphars,
Waving the tassels of her silken grass
 Below her silver stars.

But in the purple pool there nothing grows,
Not the white water-lily spoked with gold;
Though best she loves the hollows, and well knows
On quiet streams her broad shields to unfold:
 Yet should her roots but try
 Within these deeps to lie,
Not her long-reaching stalk could ever hold
 Her waxen head so high.

Sometimes an angler comes, and drops his hook
Within its hidden depths, and 'gainst a tree

Leaning his rod, reads in some pleasant book
Forgetting soon his pride of fishery;
 And dreams, or falls asleep,
 While curious fishes peep
About his nibbled bait, or scornfully
 Dart off and rise and leap.

And sometimes a slow figure 'neath the trees,
In ancient-fashioned smock, with tottering care
Upon a staff propping his weary knees,
May by the pathway of the forest fare:
 As from a buried day
 Across the mind will stray
Some perishing mute shadow,—and unaware
 He passeth on his way.

Else, he that wishes solitude is safe,
Whether he bathe at morning in the stream:
Or lead his love there when the hot hours chafe
The meadows, busy with a blurring steam;
 Or watch, as fades the light,
 The gibbous moon grow bright,
Until her magic rays dance in a dream,
 And glorify the night.

Where is this bower beside the silver Thames?
O pool and flowery thickets, hear my vow!
O trees of freshest foliage and straight stems,
No sharer of my secret I allow:

Lest ere I come the while
Strange feet your shades defile;
Or lest the burly oarsman turn his prow
Within your guardian isle.

ROBERT BRIDGES.

A LESSON TO MY GHOST

Shall it be said that the wind's gone over
The hill this night, and no ghost there?
Not the shape of an old-time lover
Paeing the old road, the high road there?
By the peacock tree, the tree that spreads its branches
Like a proud peacock's tail (so my lady says),
Under a cloudy sky, while the moon launches
Scattered beams of light along the dark silences?
I will be a ghost there, though I yet am breathing,
A living presence still in tight cottage walls,
Sitting by the fire whose smoke goes wreathing
Over fields and farmyards and farmyard stalls.
As a player going to rehearse his faring,
I will send my ghost there before my bones are dust,
Bid it learn betimes the sock it shall be wearing
When it bids the clay good-bye, as all ghosts must.
Hush, then; upstairs sleep my lady and her mother;
The cat curls the night away, and will not stir;
Beams of lamp and beech-log cross one another,

No wind walks in the garden there.
Go, my ghost, it calls you, the high road, the winding,
Written by the moonlight on the sleeping hill;
I will watch the ashes, you go finding
The way you shall walk for generations still.
The window-latch is firm, the curtain does not tremble,
The wet grass bends not under your tread,
Brushing you shake not the rain from the bramble,
They hear no gate who lie abed.
Nodding I stare at the hearth, but I see you,
My half-wit travels with you the road;
There shall be your kingdom when death shall free you
When body's wit is neither leash nor goad.
Past the peacock branches proudly gliding,
Your own ghost now, I know, I know,
You look to the moon on the hill-top riding,
The mares in the meadow sleep as you go.
Your eyes that are dark yet great for divining
Brood on the valleys of wood and plough,
And you stand where the silver flower is staining
Of cherry against the black holly bough.
Rehearse, O rehearse, as you pass by the hedgerows,
Remembrance of all that was my bright will,
That so my grave of whispers and echoes
May rest for the ghost that is yet on the hill.
The primroses burn and the cowslips cover
The starry meadows as heaven is clad;
Learn them all, O ghost, as a lover,
So shall your coming again be glad.

The inn-sign hangs in the windless watches,
You pass the shadowy piles of stone
Under the walls where the hawthorn catches
Shapes from the moon that are not its own.
Wander, wander down by the cresses
Over the crest of the hill, between
The brown lych-gate and the cider-presses,
Past the well and across the green.
Heed me, my ghost, my heir. To-morrow,
Or soon, my body to ash must fall.
Heed me, ghost, and I shall not sorrow—
Learn this beauty, O learn it all.
Night goes on, the becch-log's ended,
Half-wit's drowsy, and doctrine done,—
Ghost, come home from the road; befriended
My moon shall be when I leave the sun.

JOHN DRINKWATER.

NIGHT RHAPSODY

How beautiful it is to wake at night,
When over all there reigns the ultimate spell
Of complete silence, darkness absolute,
To feel the world, tilted on axle-tree,
In slow gyration, with no sensible sound,
Unless to ears of unimagined beings,
Resident incorporeal or stretched

In vigilance of ecstasy among
Ethereal paths and the celestial maze
The rumour of our onward course now brings
A steady rustle, as of some strange ship
Darkling with soundless sail all set and amply filled
By volume of an ere-constant air,
At fullest night, through seas for ever calm,
Swept lovely and unknown for ever on.

How beautiful it is to wake at night,
Embalmed in darkness watchful, sweet, and still,
As is the brain's mood flattered by the swim
Of currents circumvolvent in the void,
To lie quite still and to become aware
Of the dim light cast by nocturnal skies
On a dim earth beyond the window-ledge,
To brood apart in calm and joy awhile
Until the spirit sinks and scarcely knows
Whether self is, or if self only is,
For ever . . .

How beautiful to wake at night,
Within the room grown strange, and still, and sweet
And live a century while in the dark
The dripping wheel of silence slowly turns;
To watch the window open on the night,
A dewy silent deep where nothing stirs,
And, lying thus, to feel dilate within
The press, the conflict, and the heavy pulse

Of incommunicable sad ecstasy,
Growing until the body seems outstretched
In perfect crucifixion on the arms
Of a cross pointing from last void to void,
While the heart dies to a mere midway spark.

All happiness thou holdest, happy night,
For such as lie awake and feel dissolved
The peaceful spice of darkness and the cool
Breath hither blown from the ethereal flowers
That mist thy fields! O happy, happy wounds,
Conditioned by existence in humanity,
That have such powers to heal them! slow sweet sighs
Torn from the bosom, silent wails, the birth
Of such long-treasured tears as pain his eyes,
Who, waking, hears the divine solitudes
Of midnight with ineffable purport charged.

How beautiful it is to wake at night,
Another night, in darkness yet more still,
Save when the myriad leaves on full-fledged boughs,
Filled rather by the perfume's wandering flood
Than by dispersion of the still sweet air,
Shall from the furthest utter silences
In glimmering secrecy have gathered up
An host of whisperings and scattered sighs,
To loose at last a sound as of the plunge
And lapsing seethe of some Pacific wave,

Which, risen from the star-thronged outer troughs,
Rolls in to wreath with circling foam away
The flutter of the golden moths that haunt
The star's one glimmer daggered on wet sands.

So beautiful it is to wake at night!
Imagination, loudening with the surf
Of the midsummer wind among the boughs,
Gathers my spirit from the haunts remote
Of faintest silence and the shades of sleep,
To bear me on the summit of her wave
Beyond known shores, beyond the mortal edge
Of thought terrestrial, to hold me poised
Above the frontiers of infinity,
To which in the full reflux of the wave
Come soon I must, bubble of solving foam,
Borne to those other shores—now never mine
Save for a hovering instant, short as this
Which now sustains me ere I be drawn back—
To learn again, and wholly learn, I trust,
How beautiful it is to wake at night.

ROBERT NICHOLS.

UNSATIED MEMORY

Emerging from deep sleep my eyes unseal
To a pursuing strangeness. O to be
Where but a moment past I was, though where
The place, the time I know not, only feel
Far from this banished and so shrunken me,
Struck conscious to the alien dawn's blank peer!

Between two worlds, homeless, I doubt of both
Knowing only that I seemed possessing realms
And now have nothing. In this glimmering cave
Of daylight, whither I return so loth,
The emptiness of silence overwhelms;—
Still, vision-haunted, like the blind, I crave.

For splendour beats along my blood in gleams
As of a skiey largeness closed and lost,
That memory torments itself to clutch,
Hungering unsated for that light of dreams
Pursued down shadowy paths that foil, exhaust,
And lose me in a cloud I cannot touch.

Fixed as in frost the motionless dim shape
Of each accustomed thing about my bed
Is like an enmity at watch for stale
Habit to repossess me past escape.
In the dead light all seems apart and dead,
Yet menaces. The ticked hour is my jail.

Yet I had sense as of a forge whose blast
Could fuse this stark world into glorious flow
Of young power streaming irresistible,
And I, dilated, roamed a region vast,
Feasting in vision, with a soul aglow,
And Time a steed to pace or race at will.

Where is that world that I am fallen from?
Look, as a sea-weed left at ebb to pine
Hueless and shrunken, that had liberty
To wander sparkle-fresh in its own foam,
Trailing its rosy hair in the long brine,
So am I cast up; from what haunted sea?

An ocean of the mind, without access
Save in the labyrinths of sleep, a main
Deep with the memory of all memories,
Thoughts, and imaginations numberless
That ever lodged in the brief-living brain,
Washing our sun-lit ignorance: was it this?

Then miserable I, that have but sucked
Dull oozeings, vanished into vaporous dew,
From springs that custom closes like a stone
And leaden fear and clayey doubt obstruct,
Heir of the earth's youth and of all it knew,
What am I but a vessel charged with oblivion?

Ah, surely I was rather native there
Where all desires were lovely, and the power
Of Time irrevocably creeping sure
Was uncreated, than in this numb air
Of mapped days and of hour pursuing hour,
Endless impediment and forfeiture.

O we go shrouded from ourselves, and hide
The soul from its own splendour, and encrust
The virgin sense with thinking. Then some chance
Moment reveals us: we are deified,
Feeling and seeing; gold gleams from the rust;
And, marvelling at our lost inheritance,

We breathe the air of beauty; we regale
The mind with innocence; joy has no stint;
And we are chartered for the world's wide sea,
Reason the rudder, not the sky-filled sail.—
Still clings about us some imputing hint
Of strangeness, even in self-captivity.

Before me comes a vision of the old,
With dear experience sunken in their eyes
And furrowed on their faces; scarce a spark
Betrays the quick fire that once made them bold
All their strength's only for that enterprise
Which takes them soon into the engulfing dark.

I think of old ships stranded, how they stir
The mind to see their beauty in its decay.
For they, unmemoried and mute, have been
Companions of the wild winds without fear,
And carried far adventure, who shall say
Into what glories we have never seen?

LAURENCE BINYON.

STREETS

I am going
Up and down the roads and alleys
Through the forests of the city,
Hunting thoughts, hunting dreams.
My mind shall wander through the streets
Whistling to a vague adventure,
Plucking strange fancies where they lurk and peer
And casting them away.
Dusk is creeping through the town
Lighting the lamps and loitering,
Leaving smoky clouds of shadow,
Hovering clouds of peace;
And behind her race the winds
Whining to the scent of darkness,
Scattering the dust
With their swift hounds' feet. . . .
I am a hunter in the city's jungle,

Exploring all her secret mysteries.
I know her well,
The moaning highways,
And whispering alleys,
The chimney-dishevelled roofs
Where the moon walks delicately
As a stray spectral cat;
The little forlorn squares
Where one stands
Drooping bediaggled hair and fingers
Over the benches where the people sit
And stir not from their sullen postures,
Staring out where evening passes
With such a sauntering dreamy step.
I know her parks that spring had decked with garlands
Fluttered with flags and child imaginings,
Powdered with blossoms exquisite and shy,
Haunted with lovers and their last year's ghosts.
Now stripped with autumn, as the ragpicker
Wrapped in his tattered coat emaciate
Picks up the littered wreck of holiday
To mount the dust heap where our memories lie
Sprawled in a mess of ruins. . . .
I know her monotone of gloomy mansions,
Repeating each in each a dull despair,
Indifferent and dignified;
Those tarnished prisons lined with white and gold,
With dismal silences of velvet carpets,
Where starving souls are kept

Feeding upon each other's isolations,
Not daring to escape. . . .
Some roads seem steep as mountains, weary me
With their crude temples built in praise of lust,
Squatting and smiling at some hideous dream
Of fat bejewelled goddesses, or gods
Flock-coated, undismayed by prayers and tears,
Their hats atilt like halos on their heads. . . .

I love the ribald multi-coloured crowd,
Its radiant loves, and laughter, all the faces
That are as songs, as flowers, as hovering stardust. . . .
I love the memory-crusted taverns
In which my heart has leapt to a fiddler's tune
Until the dawn,
Like a white minstrel, stopped to sing
Fantastic serenades, and called me forth
Where through the crystal chandeliers of morning
Dew-prismed shone the sun. . . .
I love the narrow streets whose crippled houses
Are bathed in vitriol twilight,
Spitting smoke,
Or making oaths and mouths at one another. . . .
While between
The flaring tinsel lights of shop and window
Are gaps of goblin darkness passaging
Into Cimmerian depths of mystery and sin. . . .
Wan children stare at me, and in their eyes
I see the flickering pallor of the lamps,

Reflective of the solitude of stars. . . .

And I am thrilled

With horror and the hope for tragedies. . .

!

But they surround my heart, these weary streets,

Yea, in my soul they cut their mournful paths,

And through them pass forever

Those shadow figures trudging through the grey

Like penitent souls through haunted corridors. . . .

Ah, Grief, thou wanderer,

Thou maker of music, lingering and sweet!

Here dost thou pause to play thy shrill faint tunes,

Thy fingers touch the stops to loose our tears,

And shake our hearts, and fold our hands in prayer.

Through all the winding mazes of the city

Thy stooping shoulders and the pitiful faces are seen.

And thou dost stand before the gate of brass,

And by the iron door,

Under the windows where we sit and wait

For some sweet promise to unfold itself

From the shut scrolls of sleep,

And at the dusty curtain that divides

Glory from Death,

And lover from the lover. . . .

—

Now in my room I sit,

And round me falls the darkness

In rustling folds of peace.

But round my heart I know

No scarves of sleep and silence can be bound
To shut the city out.
For I shall feel the rush of streets
Shooting inquisitive fingers into chaos,
Piercing the night's remote divinity.
And I shall never rid me of these scars
'That time and man have cut into my thought,
Never shake off my shoulders
The burden of the city's pain.
Oh, never shall we escape thee,
Mother of mutiny and want,
Thou beautiful mistress of Grief. . . .
Oh, never shall we escape thy insomnial nights
Beating with ineloquent hands
The tambourines of time,
The drums of war;
Fevering our minds
With the swollen traffic of thoughts,
The wheels and rattle of an endless search. . . .

Tired I am with wandering,
Picked with the lights and jostled by the worlds,
More jaded than the Moon, more hopeless, grey,
Than that sad pilgrim lost amid the stars! . . .

IRIS TREE.

THE CHILD AND THE MARINER

A dear old couple my grandparents were,
And kind to all dumb things; they saw in Heaven
The lamb that Jesus petted when a child;
Their faith was never draped by Doubt: to them
Death was a rainbow in Eternity,
That promised everlasting brightness soon.
An old seafaring man was he; a rough
Old man, but kind; and hairy, like the nut
Full of sweet milk. All day on shore he watched
The winds for sailors' wives, and told what ships
Enjoyed fair weather, and what ships had storms;
He watched the sky, and he could tell for sure
What afternoons would follow stormy morns,
If quiet nights would end wild afternoons.
He leapt away from scandal with a roar,
And if a whisper still possessed his mind,
He walked about and cursed it for a plague.
He took offence at Heaven when beggars passed,
And sternly called them back to give them help.
In this old captain's house I lived, and things
That house contained were in ships' cabins once:
Sea-shells and charts and pebbles, model ships;
Green weeds, dried fishes stuffed, and coral stalks;
Old wooden trunks with handles of spliced rope,
With copper saucers full of monies strange,
That seemed the savings of dead men, not touched
To keep them warm since their real owners died;

Strings of red beads, methought were dipped in blood,
And swinging lamps, as though the house might move;
An ivory lighthouse built on ivory rocks,
The bones of fishes and three bottled ships.
And many a thing was there which sailors make
In idle hours, when on long voyages,
Of marvellous patience, to no lovely end.
And on those charts I saw the small black dots
That were called islands, and I knew they had
Turtles and palms, and pirates' buried gold.
There came a stranger to my granddad's house,
The old man's nephew, a seafarer too;
A big, strong able man who could have walked
Twm Barlun's hill all clad in iron mail;
So strong he could have made one man his club
To knock down others—Henry was his name,
No other name was uttered by his kin.
And here he was, sooth ill-clad, 'but oh,
Thought I, what secrets of the sea are his!
This man knows coral islands in the sea,
And dusky girls heartbroken for white men;
This sailor knows of wondrous lands afar,
More rich than Spain, when the Phœnicians shipped
Silver for common ballast, and they saw
Horses at silver mangers eating grain;
This man has seen the wind blow up a mermaid's hair
Which, like a golden serpent, reared and stretched
To feel the air away beyond her head.
He begged my pennies, which I gave with joy—

He will most certainly return some time
A self-made king of some new land, and rich.
Alas that he, the hero of my dreams,
Should be his people's scorn; for they had rose
To proud command of ships, whilst he had toiled
Before the mast for years, and well content;
Him they despised, and only Death could bring
A likeness in his face to show like them.
For he drank all his pay, nor went to sea
As long as ale was easy got on shore.
Now, in his last long voyage he had sailed
From Plymouth Sound to where sweet odours fan
The Cingalese at work, and then back home—
But came not near his kin till pay was spent.
He was not old, yet seemed so; for his face
Looked like the drowned man's in the morgue, when it
Has struck the wooden wharves and keels of ships.
And all his flesh was pricked with Indian ink,
His body marked as rare and delicate
As dead men struck by lightning under trees
And pictured with fine twigs and curled ferns;
Chains on his neck and anchors on his arms;
Rings on his fingers, bracelets on his wrist;
And on his breast the Jane of Appledore
Was schooner rigged, and in full sail at sea.
He could not whisper with his strong hoarse voice,
No more than could a horse creep quietly;
He laughed to scorn the men that muffled close
For fear of wind, till all their neck was hid,

Like Indian corn wrapped up in long green leaves;
He knew no flowers but seaweeds brown and green,
He knew no birds but those that followed ships.
Full well he knew the water-world; he heard
A grander music there than we on land,
When organ shakes a church; swore he would make
The sea his home, though it was always roused
By such wild storms as never leave Cape Horn;
Happy to hear the tempest grunt and squeal
Like pigs heard dying in a slaughterhouse.
A true-born mariner, and this his hope—
His coffin would be what his cradle was,
A boat to drown in and be sunk at sea;
To drown at sea and lie a dainty corpse
Salted and iced in Neptune's larder deep.
This man despised small coasters, fishing-smacks;
He scorned those sailors who at night and morn
Can see the coast, when in their little boats
They go a six days' voyage and are back
Home with their wives for every Sabbath day.
Much did he talk of tankards of old beer,
And bottled stuff he drank in other lands,
Which was a liquid fire like Hell to gulp,
But Paradise to sip.

And so he talked;
Nor did those people listen with more awe
To Lazarus—whom they had seen stone dead—
Than did we urchins to that seaman's voice.

He many a tale of wonder told: of where,
At Argostoli, Cephalonia's sea
Ran over the earth's lip in heavy floods;
And then again of how the strange Chincse
Conversed much as our homely Blackbirds sing.
He told us how he sailed in one old ship
Near that volcano Martinique, whose power
Shook like dry leaves the whole Caribbean seas;
And made the sun set in a sea of fire
Which only half was his; and dust was thick
On deck, and stones were pelted at the mast.
So, as we walked along, that seaman dropped
Into my greedy ears such words that sleep
Stood at my pillow half the night perplexed.
He told how isles sprang up and sank again,
Between short voyages, to his amaze;
How they did come and go, and cheated charts;
Told how a crew was cursed when one man killed
A bird that perched upon a moving barque;
And how the sea's sharp needles, firm and strong,
Ripped open the bellies of big, iron ships;
Of mighty icebergs in the Northern seas,
That haunt the far horizon like white ghosts.
He told of waves that lift a ship so high
That birds could pass from starboard unto port
Under her dripping keel.

Oh, it was sweet
To hear that seaman tell such wondrous tales:

How deep the sea in parts, that drownèd men
Must go a long way to their graves and sink
Day after day, and wander with the tides.
He spake of his own deeds; of how he sailed
One summer's night along the Bosphorus,
And he—who knew no music like the wash
Of waves against a ship, or wind in shrouds—
Heard then the music on that woody shore
Of nightingales, and feared to leave the deck,
He thought 'twas sailing into Paradise.
To hear these stories all we urchins placed
Our pennies in that seaman's ready hand;
Until one morn he signed for a long cruise,
And sailed away—we never saw him more.
Could such a man sink in the sea unknown?
Nay, he had found a land with something rich,
That kept his eyes turned inland for his life.
“A damn bad sailor and a landshark too,
No good in port or out”—my granddad said.

WILLIAM H. DAVIES.

II. History and Legend

THE HIGHWAYMAN

PART ONE

I

The wind was a torrent of darkness among the gusty trees.

The moon was a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas.

The road was a ribbon of moonlight over the purple moor,

And the highwayman came riding—

Riding—riding—

The highwayman came riding, up to the old inn-door.

II

He'd a French cocked-hat on his forehead, a bunch of lace at his chin,

A coat of the claret velvet, and breeches of brown doeskin.

They fitted with never a wrinkle. His boots were up to
the thigh.

And he rode with a jewelled twinkle,

His pistol butts a-twinkle,

His rapier hilt a-twinkle, under the jewelled sky.

III

Over the cobbles he clattered and clashed in the dark
inn-yard.

He tapped with his whip on the shutters, but all was
locked and barred.

He whistled a tune to the window, and who should be
waiting there

But the landlord's black-eyed daughter,

Bess, the landlord's daughter,

Plaiting a dark red love-knot into her long black hair.

IV

And dark in the dark old inn-yard a stable-wicket
creaked

Where Tim the ostler listened. His face was white and
peaked.

His eyes were hollows of madness, his hair like mouldy
hay,

But he loved the landlord's daughter,

The landlord's red-lipped daughter.

Dumb as a dog he listened, and he heard the robber
say—

V

“ One kiss, my bonny sweetheart, I’m after a prize to-
night,
But I shall be back with the yellow gold before the morn-
ing light;
Yet, if they press me sharply, and harry me through the
day,
Then look for me by moonlight,
 Watch for me by moonlight,
I’ll come to thee by moonlight, though hell should bar
the way.”

VI

He rose upright in the stirrups. He scarce could reach
her hand,
But she loosened her hair in the casement. His face burnt
like a brand
As the black cascade of perfume came tumbling over his
breast;
And he kissed its waves in the moonlight,
 (Oh, sweet black waves in the moonlight!)
Then he tugged at his rein in the moonlight, and galloped
away to the west.

PART TWO

I

He did not come in the dawning. He did not come at
noon;

And out of the tawny sunset, before the rise of the moon,
When the road was a gypsy's ribbon, looping the purple
moor,

A red-coat troop came marching—

Marching—marching—

King George's men came marching, up to the old inn-
door.

II

They said no word to the landlord. They drank his ale
instead.

But they gagged his daughter, and bound her to the foot
of her narrow bed.

Two of them knelt at her casement, with muskets at
their side!

There was death at every window;

And hell at one dark window;

For Bess could see, through her casement, the road that
he would ride.

III

They had tied her up to attention, with many a sniggering
jest.

They had bound a musket beside her, with the barrel
beneath her breast!

"Now keep good watch!" and they kissed her.

She heard the dead man say—

Look for me by moonlight;

Watch for me by moonlight;

*I'll come to thee by moonlight, though hell should bar the
way!*

IV

She twisted her hands behind her; but all the knots
held good!

She writhed her hands till her fingers were wet with
sweat or blood!

They stretched and strained in the darkness, and the
hours crawled by like years,

Till, now, on the stroke of midnight,

Cold, on the stroke of midnight,

The tip of one finger touched it! The trigger at least
was hers!

V

The tip of one finger touched it. She strove no more for
the rest.

Up, she stood up to attention, with the barrel beneath
her breast.

She would not risk their hearing; she would not strive
again;

For the road lay bare in the moonlight;

Blank and bare in the moonlight;

And the blood of her veins, in the moonlight, throbbed
to her lover's refrain.

VI

Tlot-tlot; tlot-tlot! Had they heard it? The horse-
hoofs ringing clear;
Tlot-tlot, tlot-tlot, in the distance? Were they deaf that
they did not hear?
Down the ribbon of moonlight, over the brow of the hill,
The highwayman came riding,
Riding—riding—
The red-coats looked to their priming. She stood up,
straight and still.

VII

Tlot-tlot, in the frosty silence! *Tlot-tlot,* in the echoing
night!
Nearer he came and nearer. Her face was like a light.
Her eyes grew wide for a moment; she drew one last
deep breath,
Then her finger moved in the moonlight,
Her musket shattered the moonlight,
Shattered her breast in the moonlight and warned him—
with her death.

VIII

He turned; he spurred to the west; he did not know
who stood
Bowed, with her head o'er the musket, drenched with
her own blood!
Not till the dawn he heard it, and his face grew grey
to hear

How Bess, the landlord's daughter,
 The landlord's black-eyed daughter,
Had watched for her love in the moonlight, and died in
 the darkness there.

IX

Back, he spurred like a madman, shouting a curse to the
 sky,
With the white road smoking behind him and his rapier
 brandished high.
Blood-red were his spurs in the golden noon; wine-
 red was his velvet coat;
When they shot him down on the highway,
 Down like a dog on the highway,
And he lay in his blood on the highway, with the bunch
 of lace at his throat.

.

X

*And still of a winter's night, they say, when the wind is in
 the trees,
When the moon is a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy
 seas,
When the road is a ribbon of moonlight over the purple
 moor,
A highwayman comes riding—
 Riding—riding—
A highwayman comes riding, up to the old inn-door.*

XI

*Over the cobbles he clatters and clangs in the dark inn-yard.
He taps with his whip on the shutters, but all is locked and
barred.*

*He whistles a tune to the window, and who should be waiting
there*

But the landlord's black-eyed daughter,

Bess, the landlord's daughter,

Plaiting a dark red love-knot into her long black hair.

ALFRED NOYES.

MISS THOMPSON GOES SHOPPING

In her lone cottage on the downs,	Miss
With winds and blizzards and great crowns	Thompson
Of shining cloud, with wheeling plover	at Home.
And short grass sweet with the small white clover,	
Miss Thompson lived, correct and meek,	
A lonely spinster, and every week	
On market-day she used to go	
Into the little town below,	
Tucked in the great downs' hollow bowl	
Like pebbles gathered in a shoal.	

So, having washed her plates and cup
And banked the kitchen-fire up,
Miss Thompson slipped upstairs and dressed,

She goes a
Marketing.

Put on her black (her second best),
The bonnet trimmed with rusty plush,
Peeped in the glass with simpering blush,
From camphor-smelling cupboard took
Her thicker jacket off the hook
Because the day might turn to cold.
Then, ready, slipped downstairs and rolled
The hearthrug back; then searched about,
Found her basket, ventured out,
Snecked the door and paused to lock it
And plunge the key in some deep pocket.
Then as she tripped demurely down
The steep descent, the little town
Spread wider till its sprawling street
Enclosed her and her footfalls beat
On hard stone pavement, and she felt
Those throbbing ecstasies that melt
Through heart and mind, as, happy, free,
Her small, prim personality
Merged into the seething strife
Of auction-marts and city life.

Serenely down the busy stream
Miss Thompson floated in a dream.
Now, hovering bee-like, she would stop
Entranced before some tempting shop,
Getting in people's way and prying
At things she never thought of buying:
Now wafted on without an aim,

She visits the
Bootmaker.

Until in course of time she came
To Watson's bootshop. Long she pries
At boots and shoes of every size—
Brown football-boots with bar and stud—
For boys that scuffle in the mud,
And dancing-pumps with pointed toes
Glossy as jet, and dull black bows;
Slim ladies' shoes with two-inch heel
And sprinkled beads of gold and steel—
"How anyone can wear such things!"
On either side the doorway springs
(As in a tropic jungle loom
Masses of strange thick-petalled bloom
And fruits misshapen) fold on fold
A growth of sand-shoes rubber-soled,
Clambering the door-posts, branching, spawning
Their barbarous bunches like an awning
Over the windows and the doors.
But, framed among the other stores,
Something has caught Miss Thompson's eye
(O worldliness! O vanity!),
A pair of slippers—scarlet plush,
Miss Thompson feels a conscious blush
Suffuse her face, as though her thought
Had ventured further than it ought.
But O that colour's rapturous singing
And the answer in her lone heart ringing!
She turns (O Guardian Angels, stop her
From doing anything improper!),

She turns; and see, she stoops and bungles
In through the sand-shoes' hanging jungles,
Away from light and common sense,
Into the shop dim-lit and dense
With smells of polish and tanned hide.

Soon from a dark recess inside
Fat Mrs. Watson comes slip-slop
To mind the business of the shop.
She walks flat-footed with a roll—
A serviceable, homely soul,
With kindly, ugly face like dough,
Hair dull and colourless as tow.
A huge Scotch pebble fills the space
Between her bosom and her face.
One sees her making beds all day.
Miss Thompson lets her say her say:
"So chilly for the time of year.
It's ages since we saw you here."
Then, heart a-flutter, speech precise,
Describes the shoes and asks the price.
"Them, Miss? Ah, them is six-and-nine."
Miss Thompson shudders down the spine
(Dream of impossible romance).
She eyes them with a wistful glance,
Torn between good and evil. Yes,
For half-a-minute and no less
Miss Thompson strives with seven devils,
Then, soaring over earthly levels,

Mrs.
Watson.

Wrestles
with a
Tempta-
tion;
And is
Saved.

Turns from the shoes with lingering touch—
“ Ah, six-and-nine is far too much.
Sorry to trouble you. Good day!”

A little further down the way
Stands Miles's fish-shop, whence is shed
So strong a smell of fishes dead
That people of a subtler sense
Hold their breath and hurry thence.
Miss Thompson hovers there and gazes:
Her housewife's knowing eye appraises
Salt and fresh, severely cons
Kippers bright as tarnished bronze:
Great cods disposed upon the sill,
Chilly and wet, with gaping gill,
Flat head, glazed eye, and mute, uncouth,
Shapeless, wan, old-woman's mouth.
Next a row of soles and plaice
With querulous and twisted face,
And red-eyed bloaters, golden-grey;
Smoked haddocks ranked in neat array;
A group of smelts that take the light
Like slips of rainbow, pearly bright;
Silver trout with rosy spots,
And coral shrimps with keen black dots
For eyes, and hard and jointed sheath,
And crisp tails curving underneath.
But there upon the sanded floor,
More wonderful in all that store

c
She visits the
Fishmonger.

Than anything on slab or shelf,
Stood Miles, the fishmonger, himself.

Four-square*he stood and filled the place. Mi. Miles
His huge hands and his jolly face
Were red. He had a mouth to quaff,
Pint after pint: a sounding laugh
But wheezy at the end, and oft
His eyes bulged outwards and he coughed.
Aproned he stood from chin to toe.
The apron's vertical long flow
Warped grandly outwards to display
His hale, round belly hung midway,
Whose apex was securely bound
With apron-strings wrapped round and round.
Outside, Miss Thompson, small and staid,
Felt, as she always felt, afraid
Of this huge man who laughed so loud
And drew the notice of the crowd.
Awhile she paused in timid thought,
Then promptly hurried in and bought
"Two kippers, please. Yes, lovely weather."
"Two kippers? Sixpence altogether?"
And in her basket laid the pair
Wrapped face to face in newspaper.

Then on she went, as one half blind,
For things were stirring in her mind;
Then turned about with fixed intent

Relapses into
Temptation;

And, heading for the bootshop, went
Straight in and bought the scarlet slippers And Falls.
And popped them in beside the kippers.

So much for that. From there she tacked, She visits the
Still flushed by this decisive act, Chemist.
Westward, and came without a stop
To Mr. Wren the chemist's shop,
And stood awhile outside to see
The tall, big-bellied bottles three—
Red, blue, and emerald, richly bright
Each with its burning core of light.
The bell chimed as she pushed the door.
Spotless the oilcloth on the floor,
Limpid as water each glass case,
Each thing precisely in its place.
Rows of small drawers, black-lettered each
With curious words of foreign speech,
Ranked high above the other ware.
The old strange fragrance filled the air,
A fragrance like the garden pink,
But tinged with vague medicinal stink
Of camphor, soap, new sponges, blent
With chloroform and violet scent.

And Wren the chemist, tall and spare, Mr. Wren.
Stood gaunt behind his counter there.
Quiet and very wise he seemed,
With skull-like face, bald head that gleamed;

Through spectacles his eyes looked kind.
He wore a pencil tucked behind
His ear. And never he mistakes
The wildest signs the doctor makes
Prescribing drugs. Brown paper, string,
He will not use for any thing,
But all in neat white parcels packs
And sticks them up with sealing-wax.
Miss Thompson bowed and blushed, and then
Undoubting bought of Mr. Wren,
Being free from modern scepticism,
A bottle for her rheumatism;
Also some peppermints to take
In case of wind; an oval cake
Of scented soap; a penny square
Of pungent naphthaline to scare
The moth. And after Wren had wrapped
And sealed the lot, Miss Thompson clapped
Them in beside the fish and shoes;
“ Good day,” she says, and off she goes.

Beelike Miss Thompson, whither next?
Outside, you pause awhile, perplex,
Your bearings lost. Then all comes back
And round she wheels, hot on the track
Of Giles the grocer, and from there
To Emilie the milliner,
There to be tempted by the sight
Of hats and blouses fiercely bright.

Is Led away to
the Pleasures of
Town, such as
Groceries and
Millinery.

(O guard Miss Thompson, Powers that Be,
From Ciucleness and Vulgarity.)

Still on from shop to shop she goes · And other
With sharp bird's-eye, enquiring nose, Alluicments,
Prying and peering, entering some,
Oblivious of the thought of home.
The town brimmed up with deep-blue haze,
But still she stayed to flit and gaze,
Her eyes ablur with rapturous sights,
Her small soul full of small delights,
Empty her puise, her basket filled.
The traffic in the town was stilled.
The clock struck six. Men thronged the But at
 inns. length is
 Convinced of
 Indiscretion.
Dear, dear, she should be home long since.

Then as she climbed the misty downs And Returns
The lamps were lighted in the town's Home.
Small streets. She saw them star by star
Multiplying from afar;
Till, mapped beneath her, she could trace
Each street, and the wide square market-place
Sunk deeper and deeper as she went
Higher up the steep ascent.
And all that soul-uplifting stir
Step by step fell back from her,
The glory gone, the blossoming
Shrivelled, and she, a small, frail thing,

Carrying her laden basket. Till
Darkness and silence of the hill
Received her in their restful care
And stars came dropping through the air.

But loudly, sweetly sang the slippers
In the basket with the kippers;
And loud and sweet the answering thrills
From her lone heart on the hills.

MARTIN ARMSTRONG.

THE PASSING OF THE FARMER

"What caused this breakdown, do I think?
Undoubtedly," the Ox cried, "drink,
That first of all the reason dims
Then staggers trunk and limbs."

At this the Ass informed the Cow,
"There's little hope for Master now,
Since Sunday night he's grown so weak
He scarce can sip or speak.

"But grief? Of us four-footed, though
Our disillusion has dawned slow,
I doubt there's one can dare pretend
Grief at this dodderer's end.

" He has done no good about the farm
These fifteen years, but plenty harm.
For all his use," the old Ass said,
" He might have long been dead.

" Our hopeful forbears at his birth
Proclaimed the reign of Heaven on Earth.
Now Ox and Ass (you, sir, and I)
Confess that view a lie.

" Still, to ensure domestic peace,
We inform the turkeys, ducks, and geese:
' He rules, he rules, serene and great,
Proof-armoured against fate.

" ' Granted,' we say, ' he's no more seen
Tending fat sheep in pastures green
Or scattering at the break of morn
Largesse, profuse, of corn.

" ' Master must be assumed to know
Where best his favours to bestow.
He has left us (caring for us still)
To cultivate free-will.

" ' Himself, from some grand inner room
Directs the cowman, steward, and groom,
Makes up his ledgers, page by page,
In joy or solemn rage.

" ' Our feeding and our water-time,
Our breeding and our slaughter-time,
The dyke, the hedge, the plough, the cart,
These thoughts lie next his heart.'

" The simple birds believe this true.
What now, poor poultry, will they do,
Stunned with confusion, when the glum
Gloved undertakers come,

" Tilting the coffin past the pond,
The ricks, the clamps, the yard beyond,
Skirting the midden-heap with care,
Then out, they know not where?"

" And I deplore," the Stallion said,
" The passing of this figure-head.
A farmyard moving masterless
Alarms me, I confess."

" Tut," the Cow answered, " when he's gone,
They'll find that farm-life still goes on.
Routine, be sure, ran much the same
Long years before he came.

" Though interregna, history shows,
Are fruitful of alarms and blows,
New masters always seem supplied
In place of those who have died.

" True, the same headstone marks them all,
 ' His rise was better than his fall,'
 But if this next reign too starts well . . .
 Hush now! the passing bell!"

ROBERT GRAVES.

ORPHEUS

*Love will make men dare to die for their beloved. . . .
 Of this Alcestis is a monument. . . . for she was willing
 to lay down her life for her husband; . . . and so noble
 did this appear to the gods that they granted her the
 privilege of returning to earth; . . . but Orpheus, the
 son of Ægeus, they sent empty away. . . .*

PLATO: *The Symposium.*

Orpheus the Harper, coming to the gate
 Where the implacable dim warder sate,
 Besought for parley with a shade within,
 Dearer to him than life itself had been,
 Sweeter than sunlight on Illyrian sea,
 Or bloom of myrtle, or murmur of laden bee,
 Whom lately from his unconsenting breast
 The Fates, at some capricious blind behest,
 Intolerably had reft—Eurydice,
 Dear to the sunlight as Illyrian sea,
 Sweet as the murmur of bees, or myrtle bloom—
 And unaccompanied led her to the tomb.

There, solitary by the Stygian tide,
Stayed her dear feet, the shadow of his own,
Since, 'mid the desolate millions who have died,
Each phantom walks its crowded path alone;
And there her head, that slept upon his breast,
No more had such sweet harbour for its rest,
Nor her swift ear from those disvoiced throats
Could catch one echo of his living notes,
And, dreaming nightly of her pallid doom,
No solace had he of his own young bloom,
But yearned to pour his blood into her veins
And buy her back with unimagined pains.

To whom the Shepherd of the Shadow said:
“ Yea, many thus would bargain for their dead:
But when they hear my fatal gateway clang
Life quivers in them with a last sweet pang.
’They see the smoke of home above the trees;
The cordage whistles on the harbour breeze;
The beaten path that wanders to the shore
Grows dear because they shall not tread it more;
The dog that drowsing on their threshold lies
Looks at them with their childhood in his eyes;
And in the sunset’s melancholy fall
They read a sunrise that shall give them all.”

“ Not thus am I,” the Harper smiled his scorn.
“ I see no path but those her feet have worn;
My roof-tree is the shadow of her hair,

And the light breaking through her long despair
The only sunrise that mine eyelids crave;
For doubly dead without me in the grave
Is she who, if my feet had gone before,
Had found life dark as death's abhorred shore."

The gate clanged on him, and he went his way
Amid the alien millions, mute and grey,
Swept like a cold mist down an unlit strand,
Where nameless wreckage gluts the stealthy sand
Drift of the cockle-shells of hope and faith
Wherein they foundered on the rock of death.

So came he to the image that he sought
(Less living than her semblance in his thought),
Who, at the summons of his thrilling notes,
Drew back to life as a drowned creature floats
Back to the surface: yet no less is dead.
And cold fear smote him till she spoke and said:
"Art thou then come to lay thy lips on mine,
And pour thy life's libation out like wine?
Shall I, through thee, revisit earth again,
Traverse the shining sea, the fruitful plain,
Behold the house we dwelt in, lay my head
Upon the happy pillows of our bed,
And feel in dreams the pressure of thine arms
Kindle these pulses that no memory warms?
Nay: give me for a space upon thy breast
Death's shadowy substitute for rapture—rest;

Then join again the joyous living throng,
And give me life, but give it in thy song;
For only they that die themselves may give
Life to the dead; and I would have thee live."

Fear seized him closer than her arms; but he
Answered: "Not so—for thou shalt come with me!
I sought thee not that we should part again,
But that fresh joy should bud from the old pain;
And the gods, if grudgingly their gifts they make,
Yield all to them that without asking take."

"The gods," she said, "(so runs life's ancient lore)
Yield all man takes, but always claim their score.
The iron wings of the Eumenides
When heard far off seem but a summer's breeze;
But me thou'lt have alive on earth again
Only by paying here my meed of pain.
Then lay on my cold lips the tender ghost
Of the dear kiss that used to warm them most,
Take from my frozen hands thy hands of fire,
And of my heart-strings make thee a new lyre,
That in thy music men may find my voice,
And something of me still on earth rejoice."

Shuddering he heard her, but with close-flung arm
Swept her resisting through the ghostly swarm.
"Swift, hide thee 'neath my cloak, that we may glide
Past the dim warder as the gate swings wide."

He whirled her with him, lighter than a leaf
Unwittingly whirled onward by a brief
Autumnal eddy; but when the fatal door
Suddenly yielded him to life once more,
And issuing to the all-consoling skies
He turned to seek the sunlight in her eyes,
He clutched at emptiness—she was not there;
And the dim warder answered to his prayer:
“ Once only have I seen the wonder wrought.
But when Alcestis thus her master sought,
Living she sought him not, nor dreamed that fate
For any subterfuge would swing my gate.
Loving, she gave herself to livid death,
Joyous she bought his respite with her breath,
Came, not embodied, but a tenuous shade,
In whom her rapture a great radiance made.
For never saw I ghost upon this shore
Shine with such living ecstasy before,
Nor heard an exile from the light above
Hail me with smiles: *Thou art not Death but Love!*

“ But when the gods, frustrated, this beheld,
How, living still, among the dead she dwelled,
Because she lived in him whose life she won,
And her blood beat in his beneath the sun,
They reasoned: ‘ When the bitter Stygian wave
The sweetness of love’s kisses cannot lave,
When the pale flood of Lethe washes not
From mortal mind one high immortal thought,

Akin to us the earthly creature grows,
Since nature suffices only what it knows.
If she whom we to this grey desert banned
Still dreams she treads with him the sunlit land
That for his sake she left without a tear,
Set wide the gates—her being is not here.'

"So ruled the gods; but thou, that sought'st to give
Thy life for love, yet for thyself wouldst live,
They know not for their kin; but back to earth
Give, pitying, one that is of mortal birth."

Humbled the Harper heard, and turned away,
Mounting alone to the empoverished day;
Yet, as he left the Stygian shades behind,
He heard the cordage on the harbour wind,
Saw the blue smoke above the homestead trees,
And in his hidden heart was glad of these.

EDITH WHARTON.

THE GIFT OF HARUN AL-RASHID

Kusta Ben Luka is my name, I write
To Abd Al-Rabban; fellow roysterer once,
Now the good Caliph's learned Treasurer,
And for no ear but his.

Carry this letter
Through the great gallery of the Treasure House

Where banners of the Caliphs hang, night-coloured
But brilliant as the night's embroidery,
And wait war's music; pass the little gallery;
Pass books of learning from Byzantium
Written in gold upon a purple stain,
And pause at last, I was about to say,
At the great book of Sappho's song; but no,
For should you leave my letter there, a boy's
Love-lorn, indifferent hands might come upon it
And let it fall unnoticed to the floor.
Pause at the Treatise of Parmenides
And hide it there, for Caliphs to world's end
Must keep that perfect, as they keep her song,
So great its fame.

When fitting time has passed
The parchment will disclose to some learned man
A mystery that else had found no chronicler
But the wild Bedouin. Though I approve
Those wanderers that welcomed in their tents
What great Harun Al-Rashid, occupied
With Persian embassy or Grecian war,
Must needs neglect; I cannot hide the truth
That wandering in a desert, featureless
As air under a wing, can give birds' wit.
In after time they will speak much of me
And speak but phantasy. Recall the year
When our beloved Caliph put to death
His Vizir Jaffer for an unknown reason;
"If but the shirt upon my body knew it

I'd tear it off and throw it in the fire."

That speech was all that the town knew, but he
Seemed for a while to have grown young again;
Seemed so on purpose, muttered Jaffer's friends,
That none might know that he was conscience struck—
But that's a traitor's thought. Enough for me
That in the early summer of the year
The mightiest of the princes of the world
Came to the least considered of his courtiers;
Sat down upon the fountain's marble edge,
One hand amid the goldfish in the pool;
And thereupon a colloquy took place
That I commend to all the chroniclers
To show how violent great hearts can lose
Their bitterness and find the honey-comb.
"I have brought a slender bride into the house;
You know the saying 'Change the bride with Spring
And she and I, being sunk in happiness,
Cannot endure to think you tread these paths,
When evening stirs the jasmine, and yet
Are brideless."

"I am falling into years."

"But such as you and I do not seem old
Like men who live by habit. Every day
I ride with falcon to the river's edge
Or carry the ringed mail upon my back,
Or court a woman; neither enemy,
Game-bird, nor woman does the same thing twice;

And so a hunter carries in the eye
A mimicry of youth. Can poet's thought
That springs from body and in body falls
Like this pure jet, now lost amid blue sky,
Now bathing lily leaf and fishes' scale,
Be mimicry?"

“What matters if our souls
Are nearer to the surface of the body
Than souls that start no game and turn no rhyme
The soul's own youth and not the body's youth
Shows through our lineaments. My candle's bright,
My lantern is too loyal not to show
That it was made in your great father's reign.”

“And yet the jasmine season warms our blood.”

“Great prince, forgive the freedom of my speech
You think that love has seasons, and you think
That if the spring bear off what the spring gave
The heart need suffer no defeat; but I
Who have accepted the Byzantine faith,
That seems unnatural to Arabian minds,
Think when I choose a bride I choose for ever;
And if her eye should not grow bright for mine
Or brighten only for some younger eye,
My heart could never turn from daily ruin,
Nor find a remedy.”

“But what if I
Have lit upon a woman, who so shares

Your thirst for those old crabbed mysteries,
So strains to look beyond our life, an eye
That never knew that strain would scarce seem bright,
And yet herself can seem youth's very fountain,
Being all brummed with life."

"Were it but true
I would have found the best that life can give,
Companionship in those mysterious things
That makes a man's soul or a woman's soul
Itself and not some other soul."

"That love
Must needs be in this life and in what follows
Unchanging and at peace, and it is right
Every philosopher should praise that love.
But I being none can praise its opposite.
It makes my passion stronger but to think
Like passion stirs the peacock and his mate,
The wild stag and the doe; that mouth to mouth
Is a man's mockery of the changeless soul."

And thereupon his bounty gave what now
Can shake more blossom from autumnal chill
Than all my bursting springtime knew. A girl
Perched in some window of her mother's house
Had watched my daily passage to and fro;
Had heard impossible history of my past;
Imagined some impossible history
Lived at my side; though time's disfiguring touch
Gave but more reason for a woman's care.

Yet was it love of me, or was it love
Of the stark mystery that has dazed my sight,
Perplexed her phantasy and planned her care?
Or did the torchlight of that mystery
Pick out my features in such light and shade
Two contemplating passions chose one theme
Through sheer bewilderment? She had not paced
The garden paths, nor counted up the rooms,
Before she had spread a book upon her knees
And asked about the pictures or the text;
And often those first days I saw her stare
On old dry writing in a learned tongue,
On old dry faggots that could never please
The extravagance of spring; or move a hand
As if that writing or the figured page
Were some dear cheek.

 Upon a moonless night
I sat where I could watch her sleeping form,
And wrote by candle-light; but her form moved,
And fearing that my light disturbed her sleep
I rose that I might screen it with a cloth.
I heard her voice, "Turn that I may expound
What's bowed your shoulder and made pale your cheek;"
And saw her sitting upright on the bed;
Or was it she that spoke or some great Djinn?
I say that a Djinn spoke. A live-long hour
She seemed the learned man and I the child;
Truths without father came, truths that no book
Of all the uncounted books that I have read,

Nor thought out of her mind or mine begot,
Self-born, high-born, and solitary truths,
Those terrible implacable straight lines
Drawn through the wandering vegetative dream,
Even those truths that when my bones are dust
Must drive the Arabian host.

The voice grew still,

And she lay down upon her bed and slept,
But woke at the first gleam of day, rose up
And swept the house and sang about her work
In childish ignorance of all that passed.

A dozen nights of natural sleep, and then
When the full moon swam to its greatest height
She rose, and with her eyes shut fast in sleep
Walked through the house. Unnoticed and unfelt
I wrapped her in a heavy hooded cloak, and she,
Half running, dropped at the first ridge of the desert
And there marked out those emblems on the sand
That day by day I study and marvel at,
With her white finger. I led her home asleep,
And once again she rose and swept the house
In childish ignorance of all that passed.
Even to-day, after some seven years
When maybe thrice in every moon her mouth
Murmured the wisdom of the desert Djinns,
She keeps that ignorance, nor has she now
That first unnatural interest in my books.
It seems enough that I am there; and yet,

Old fellow student, whose most patient ear
Heard all the anxiety of my passionate youth,
It seems I must buy knowledge with my peace.
What if she lose her ignorance and so,
Dream that I love her only for the voice,
That every gift and every word of praise
Is but a payment for that midnight voice
That is to age what milk is to a child!
Were she to lose her love, because she had lost
Her confidence in mine, or even lose
Its first simplicity, love, voice and all,
All my fine feathers would be plucked away
And I left shivering. The voice has drawn
A quality of wisdom from her love's
Particular quality. The signs and shapes;
All those abstractions that you fancied were
From the great treatise of Parmenides;
All, all those gyres and cubes and midnight things
Are but a new expression of her body
Drunk with the bitter sweetness of her youth.
And now my utmost mystery is out.
A woman's beauty is a storm-tossed banner;
Under it wisdom stands, and I alone—
Of all Arabia's lovers I alone—
Nor dazzled by the embroidery, nor lost
In the confusion of its night-dark folds
Can hear the armed man speak.

W. B. YEATS.

FORTY SINGING SEAMEN

I

Across the seas of Wonderland to Mogadore we plodded,
Forty singing seamen in an old black barque,
And we landed in the twilight where a Polyphemus
nodded
With his battered moon-eye winking red and
yellow through the dark!
For his eye was growing mellow,
Rich and ripe and red and yellow,
As was time, since old Ulysses made him bellow in
the dark!

Chorus.—Since Ulysses bunged his eye up with a pine-
torch in the dark!

II

Were they mountains in the gloaming on the giant's
ugly shoulders,
Just beneath the rolling eyeball, with its bleared and
vinous glow,
Red and yellow o'er the purple of the pines among the
boulders
And the shaggy horror brooding on the sullen slopes
below,
Were they pines among the boulders
Or the hair upon his shoulders?

We were only simple seamen, so of course we didn't know.

Chorus.—We were simple singing seamen, so of course we couldn't know.

III

But we crossed a plain of poppies, and we came upon
a fountain

Not of water, but of jewels, like a spray of leaping fire;
And behind it, in an emerald glade, beneath a golden
mountain

There stood a crystal palace, for a sailor to admire;
For a troop of ghosts came round us,
Which with leaves of bay they crowned us,
Then with grog they well-nigh drowned us, to the
depth of our desire!

Chorus.—And 'twas very friendly of them, as a sailor
can admire!

IV

There was music all about us, we were growing quite
forgetful

We were only singing seamen from the dirt of London-
town,

Though the nectar that we swallowed seemed to vanish
half regretful

As if we wasn't good enough to take such vittles
down,

When we saw a sudden figure
Tall and black as any nigger,
Like the devil—only bigger—drawing near us with
a frown!

Chorus.—Like the devil—but much bigger—and he
wore a golden crown!

V

And “What’s all this?” he growls at us! With dignity
we chaunted,

“Forty singing seamen, sir, as won’t be put upon!”

“What? Englishmen?” he cries. “Well, if ye don’t
mind being haunted,

Faith you’re welcome to my palace; I’m the famous
Prester John!

Will ye walk into my palace?

I don’t bear ’ee any malice!

One and all ye shall be welcome in the halls of
Prester John!

Chorus.—So we walked into the palace and the halls
of Prester John!

VI

Now the door was one great diamond and the hall a
hollow ruby—

Big as Beachy Head, my lads, nay bigger by a half!
And I sees the mate wi’ mouth agape, a-staring like
a booby

And the skipper close behind him, with his tongue
out like a calf!

Now the way to take it rightly

Was to walk along politely

Just as if you didn't notice—so I couldn't help but
laugh!

Chorus.—For they both forgot their manners and the
crew was bound to laugh!

VII

But he took us through his palace and, my lads, as I'm
a sinner,

We walked into an opal like a sunset-coloured cloud—

"My dining-room," he says, and quick as light we
saw a dinner

Spread before us by the fingers of a hidden fairy
crowd;

And the skipper, swaying gently

After dinner, murmurs faintly,

"I looks to-wards you, Prester John, you've done us
very proud!"

Chorus.—And we drank his health with honours, for
he *done* us *very* proud!

VIII

Then he walks us to his garden where we sees a feathered
demon

Very splendid and important on a sort of spicy tree!

"That's the Phoenix," whispers Prester, "which all
eddicated seamen

Knows the only one existent, and *he's* waiting for to
flee!

When his hundred years expire

Then he'll set himself a-fire

And another from his ashes rise most beautiful to see!"

Chorus.—With wings of rose and emerald most beautiful
to see!

IX

Then he says, "In yonder forest there's a little silver
river,

And whosoever drinks of it, his youth shall never die!

The centuries go by, but Prester John endures for ever

With his music in the mountains and his magic on
the sky!

While *your* hearts are growing colder,

While your world is growing older,

There's a magic in the distance, where the sea-line
meets the sky."

Chorus.—It shall call to singing seamen till the fount
o' song is dry!

X

So we thought we'd up and seek it, but that forest
fair defied us,—

First a crimson leopard laughs at us most horrible
to see,

Then a sea-green lion came and sniffed and licked his
chops and eyed us,
While a red and yellow unicorn was dancing round a
tree!
We was trying to look thinner,
Which was hard, because our dinner
Must ha' made us very tempting to a cat o' high degree!
Chorus.—Must ha' made us very tempting to the whole
menarjereel

XI

So we scuttled from that forest and across the poppy
meadows
Where the awful shaggy horror brooded o'er us in
the dark!
And we pushes out from shore again a-jumping at our
shadows,
And pulls away most joyful to the old black barquel
And home again we plodded
While the Polyphemus nodded
With his battered moon-eye winking red and yellow
through the dark.
Chorus.—Oh, the moon above the mountains, red and
yellow through the dark!

XII

Across the seas of Wonderland to London-town we
blundered,
Forty singing seamen as were puzzled for to know

If the visions that we saw was caused by—here again
we pondered—

A tippie in a vision forty thousand years ago.

Could the grog we *dreamt* we swallowed

Make us *dream* of all that followed?

We were only simple seamen, so of course we didn't
know!

Chorus.—We were simple singing seamen, so of course
we could not know.

ALFRED NOYES.

THE PAPHIAN BALL

(Another Christmas Experience of the
Mellstock Quire)

We went our Christmas rounds once more,
With quire and viols as theretofore.

Our path was near by Rushy-Pond,
Where Egdon-Heath outstretched beyond.

There stood a figure against the moon,
Tall, spare, and humming a weirdsome tune.

"You tire of Christian carols," he said:

"Come and lute at a ball instead.

"'Tis to your gain, for it ensures
That many guineas will be yours.

"A slight condition hangs on't, true,
But you will scarce say nay thereto:

"That you go blindfold; that anon
The place may not be gossiped on."

They stood and argued with each other:
"Why sing from one house to another

"These ancient hymns in the freezing night,
And all for nought? 'Tis foolish, quite!"

"—'Tis serving God, and shunning evil:
Might not elsedoing serve the devil?"

"But grand pay!" . . . They were lured by his call,
Agreeing to go blindfold all.

They walked, he guiding, some new track,
Doubting to find the pathway back.

In a strange hall they found them when
They were unblinded all again.

Gilded alcoves, great chandeliers,
Voluptuous paintings ranged in tiers.

In brief, a mansion large and rare,
With rows of dancers waiting there.

They tuned and played; the couples danced;
Half-naked women tripped, advanced,

With handsome partners footing fast,
Who swore strange oaths, and whirled them past.

And thus and thus the slow hours wore them:
While shone their guineas heaped before them.

Drowsy at length, in lieu of the dance
“*While Shepherds watched . . .*” they bowed by chance;

And in a moment, at a blink,
There flashed a change; ere they could think

The ball-room vanished and all its crew:
Only the well-known heath they view—

The spot of their crossing overnight,
When wheedled by the stranger’s sleight.

There, east, the Christmas dawn hung red,
And dark Rainbarrow with its dead

Bulged like a supine negress’ breast
Against Clyffe-Clump’s faint far-off crest.

Yea; the rare mansion, gorgeous, bright,
The ladies, gallants, gone were quite.

The heaped-up guineas, too, were gone
With the gold table they were on.

"Why did not grasp we what was owed?"
Cried some, as homeward, shamed, they strode.

Now comes the marvel and the warning:
When they had dragged to church next morning,

With downcast heads and scarce a word,
They were astound at what they heard.

Praises from all came forth in showers
For how they'd cheered the midnight hours.

"We've heard you many times," friends said,
"But like *that* never have you played!

*"Rejoice ye tenants of the earth,
And celebrate your Saviour's birth,*

"Never so thrilled the darkness through,
Or more inspired us so to do!" . . .

—The man who used to tell this tale
Was the tenor-viol, Michael Mail;

Yes; Mail the tenor, now but earth!—
I give it for what it may be worth.

THOMAS HARDY.

COLOMEN

The doves that coo in Colomen
Are never heard by mortal men
But when a human creature passes
Underneath the churchyard grasses,
In deep voices, velvet-warm,
They tell of ancient perils, storm
Long hushed, and hopes withered and dead,
And joys a long while harvested.

There was a lady small and thin
(Oh, grave! Why did you let her in?)
Her voice was sad as a dove's, her feet
Went softly through the yellow wheat,
Like stars that haunt the evening west.
Hers was the tall, round, sunny cote
Whence, as she called, her doves would float
Softly, on arm and shoulder rest,
Until the lady, leaning so,
Under the feathers of rose and snow,
Wing of azure and purple plume,
Was like a slim tree bent with bloom.

And still, at Colomen, they say,
When midsummer has stolen away
The last arch primrose, and swiftly fall
Hawthorn petals, wan as a pall,
And the grave blackbirds, that of late

Shouted the sun up, meditate,
You hear about the ruined cote
A mighty, muted sound of wings,
And faint, ghostly flutterings.
Then, if your death is near, you see
A lady standing like a tree
Bent down with blossom. Long ago
Her little joy, her long woe!

In an April dawn of rose and flame
A poor travelling painter came
Through tasselled woods, and in the tower
Beheld the lady, like a flower—
A pale flower beneath the hill
Trembling when the air is still,
Broken when the storms are wild.
The lady looked on him, and smiled
Woe, woe to Colomen,
Where never lovers come again,
Laughing in the morning air!

Dew decked the lady's hair
Because the lilac, purple and tall,
Saw her beauty and let fall
All her silver, all her sweet,
In dove-grey dawns their lips would meet
In the room beneath the tower
Where the drowsy sunlight smote
Seldom, and the air would creep

Stealthily and half asleep,
While stillness held the dancing mote,
And croonings fell from the ivied cote
With a musical, low roar,
Like summer seas on a fairy shore.

The boding wind had moaned of loss;
The boding shadow laid a cross
From the barred window to their feet;
The doves made a heart-broken, sweet
Clamour of some eerie thing.
They did not hear nor understand
How soon love is withered away
Like a flower on a frosty day!

Early in a summer dawn
When the shadows of the doves were drawn
Down the roof, and from the clover
The bees' low roar came up, her lover
Finished her portrait, thin and small
And pale, with an ethereal
Sweet air, because he had seen her soul
Come to the threshold when she stole
To meet him. There forever she stood
Like a silver fairy in a wood
Or a may-tree in the moonlight.
He told her of his dream's delight,
How they would dwell alone, aloof,
With doves crooning on the roof.

He had painted through a sapphire June
Into a thunderous dark July.

Alas! How fleet is spring! How soon
From all their little windows fly
The doves of joy! In an evil hour
Her sister saw him leave the tower.

For all her simple country grace,
Hers was a haughty, lordly race.
When night was thick and black above,
They sent the press-gang for her love.

All day, beside the memoried cote
She lay so still they thought her dead,
Her doves, that wheeled above her head.
But in her eyes a wild, remote,
Inhuman sorrow slumberèd.

When next the clover called the bee,
Where was she? Ah, where was she?

She dragged her leaden limbs across
The grey lawns, to hear the sound
That turned a sword within her wound
And made her agony of loss
So keen that if she held her breath
She almost heard the feet of death.
When all her thronging pigeons cooed
Around, with outspread arms she stood.

She seemed a pale and slender tree,
Bent with snow and not with bloom—
Bent lower towards the tomb.

She would be free of the distress
That men call joy, the littleness
That men call life—as birds are free.
So in the dewy morning hour
She hanged herself within the tower,
Beside her portrait, spirit-fair,
With these words written: “ We come again,
And ours the house of Colomen.”

Her cousins came and found her there,
While high against the painted dawn
Her pigeons—rosy, white and fawn,
Coal-black and mottled—wheeled in the air.
But while they gazed, weeping aloud,
Around the tower a silence fell.
The doves wheeled high: they could not tell
Which were birds and which was cloud.

A haunted silence held the tower,
Wherein the portrait's living eyes
Watched the dead lady with surprise,
Like a flower that gazes on a flower.

No doves returned there evermore.
The spiders wove about the door

Intricate tapestries of time,
That held the dew and held the rime.
And from the house of Colomen,
Like water from a frozen strand,
Failed the voices of maids and men,
Shrivelled the heart, shrivelled the hand,
Till there within the arching wood
No face was left but the painted face,
No sound was left of the human race,
But only the sound of doves that cooed
Sadly, intermittently—
Wheeling doves that none can see
But dying men who wander here
And see a picture, glassy-clear,
Where the milky hawthorn-blossom falls
And from the elm a blackbird calls:
Then softly from the ruined cote
A pigeon coos—and faint, remote,
A hundred pigeons answer low,
Voicing the lady's ancient woe;
And then they see her, very fair
And fragile in the scented air;
On arms and shoulders doves alight,
Multiple-tinted, like a bright
Tapestry that time has faded.
Softly purple, lilac-shaded,
The lady standeth, like a tree¹
Bent down with blossom. . . .

MARY WEBB.

THE OLD ANGLER

Twilight leaned mirrored in a pool
Where willow boughs swept green and hoar,
Silk-clear the water, calm and cool,
Silent the weedy shore:

There in abstracted, brooding mood
One fishing sate. His painted float
Motionless as a planet stood;
Motionless his boat.

A melancholy soul was this,
With lantern jaw, gnarled hand, vague eye;
Huddled in pensive solitariness
He had fished existence by.

Empty his creel; stolen his bait—
Impassively he angled on,
Though mist now showed the evening late
And daylight well-nigh gone.

Suddenly, like a tongueless bell,
Downward his gaudy cork did glide;
A deep, low-gathering, gentle swell
Spread slowly far and wide.

Wheeped out his tackle from noiseless winch,
And furtive as a thief, his thumb,

With nerve intense, wound inch by inch
A line no longer numb.

What fabulous spoil could thus unplayed
Gape upward to a mortal air?
He stoops engrossed; his tanned cheek greyed,
His heart stood still: for there,

Wondrously fairing, beneath the skin
Of secretly bubbling water seen,
Swims—not the silver of scale and fin—
But gold inmixt with green.

Deeply astir in oozy bed,
The darkening mirror ripples and rocks:
And lo—a wan-pale, lovely head,
Hook tangled in its locks!

Cold from her haunt—a Naiad slim.
Shoulder and cheek gleamed ivory white;
Though now faint stars stood over him,
The hour hard on night.

Her green eyes gazed like one half-blind
In sudden radiance; her breast
Breathed the sweet air, while gently twined,
'Gainst the cold water pressed,

Her lean webbed hands. She floated there,
Light as a scentless petalled flower,
Water-drops dewing from her hair
In tinkling beadlike shower.

So circling sidelong, her tender throat
Uttered a grieving, desolate wail;
Shrill o'er the dark pool lapsed its note,
Piteous as nightingale.

Ceased Echo. And he?—a life's remorse
Welled to a tongue unapt to charm,
But never a word broke harsh and hoarse
To quiet her alarm.

With infinite stealth his twitching thumb
Tugged softly at the tautened gut,
Bubble-light, fair, her lips now dumb,
She moved, and struggled not;

But with set, wild, unearthly eyes
Pale-gleaming, fixed as if in fear,
She couched in the water, with quickening sighs
And floated near.

In hollow heaven the stars were at play;
Wan glow-worms greened the pool-side grass;
Dipped the wide-bellied boat. His prey
Gazed on; nor breathed. Alas!—

Long sterile years had come and gone;
Youth, like a distant dream, was sped;
Heart, hope, and eyes had hungered on . . .
He turned a shaking head,

And clumsily groped amid the gold,
Sleek with night dews, of that tangling hair,
Till pricked his finger keen and cold
The barb imbedded there.

Teeth clenched, he drew his knife—"Snip, snip,"—
Groaned, and sate shivering back; and she,
Treading the water with birdlike dip,
Shook her sweet shoulders free:

Drew backward, smiling, infatuate fair,
His life's disasters in her eyes,
All longing and folly, grief, despair,
Daydreams and mysteries.

She stooped her brow; laid low her cheek,
And, steering on that silk-tressed craft,
Out from the listening, leaf-hung creek,
Tossed up her chin, and laughed—

A mocking, icy, inhuman note.
One instant flashed that crystal breast,
Leaned, and was gone. Dead-still the boat:
And the deep dark at rest.

Flits moth to flower. A water-rat
Noses the placid ripple. And lo!
Streams a lost meteor. Night is late,
And daybreak zephyrs flow . . .

And he—the cheated? Dusk till morn,
Insensate, even of hope forsook,
He muttering squats, aloof, forlorn,
Dangling a baitless hook.

WALTER DE LA MARE.

LEPANTO

White founts falling in the Courts of the sun,
And the Soldan of Byzantium is smiling as they run;
There is laughter like the fountains in that face of all
men feared,
It stirs the forest darkness, the darkness of his beard,
It curls the blood-red crescent, the crescent of his lips,
For the inmost sea of all the earth is shaken with his
ships.
They have dared the white republics up the capes of
Italy,
They have dashed the Adriatic round the Lion of the
Sea,
And the Pope has cast his arms abroad for agony and loss,
And called the kings of Christendom for swords about
the Cross.

The cold Queen of England is looking in the glass;
The shadow of the Valois is yawning at the Mass;
From evening isles fantastical rings faint the Spanish gun,
And the Lord upon the Golden Horn is laughing in the
sun.

Dim drums throbbing, in the hills half heard,
Where only on a nameless throne a crownless prince has
stirred,
Where, risen from a doubtful seat and half attained stall,
The last knight of Europe takes weapons from the wall,
The last and lingering troubadour to whom the bird has
sung,
That once went singing southward when all the world
was young.

In that enormous silence, tiny and unafraid,
Comes up along a winding road the noise of the Crusade.
Strong gongs groaning as the guns boom far,
Don John of Austria is going to the war,
Stiff flags straining in the night-blasts cold
In the gloom black-purple, in the glint old-gold,
Torchlight crimson on the copper kettle-drums,
Then the tuckets, then the trumpets, then the cannon,
and he comes.

Don John laughing in the brave beard curled,
Spurning of his stirrups like the thrones of all the world,
Holding his head up for a flag of all the free.
Love-light of Spain—hurrah!
Death-light of Africa!

Don John of Austria
Is riding to the sea.

Mahound is in his paradise above the evening star,
(*Don John of Austria is going to the war*).
He moves a mighty turban on the timeless houri's knees,
His turban that is woven of the sunsets and the seas.
He shakes the peacock gardens as he rises from his ease,
And he strides among the tree-tops and is taller than the
trees,
And his voice through all the garden is a thunder sent to
bring
Black Azrael and Ariel and Ammon on the wing.
Giants and the Genii,
Multiplex of wing and eye,
Whose strong obedience broke the sky
When Solomon was king.

They rushed in red and purple from the red clouds of
the morn,
From temples where the yellow gods shut their eyes in
scorn;
They rise in green robes roaring from the green hells of
the sea
Where fallen skies and evil hues and eyeless creatures be;
On them the sea-valves cluster and the grey sea-forests
curl,
Splashed with a splendid sickness, the sickness of the
pearl;

They swell in sapphire smoke out of the blue cracks of
the ground,—

They gather and they wonder and give worship to
Mahound.

And he saith, "Break up the mountains where the
hermit-folk can hide,

And sift the red and silver sands lest bone of saint abide,
And chase the Giaours flying night and day, not giving
rest,

For that which was our trouble comes again out of the
west.

"We have set the seal of Solomon on all things under
sun,

Of knowledge and of sorrow and endurance of things
done,

But a noise is in the mountains, in the mountains, and I
know

The voice that shook our palaces—four hundred years
ago:

It is he that saith not 'Kismet'; it is he that knows
not Fate;

It is Richard, it is Raymond, it is Godfrey in the gate!

It is he whose loss is laughter when he counts the wager
worth,

Put down your feet upon him, that our peace be on the
earth."

For he heard drums groaning and he heard guns jar,
(*Don John of Austria is going to the war*).

Sudden and still—hurrah!
Bolt from Iberia!
Don John of Austria
Is gone by Alcalar.

St. Michael's on his Mountain in the sea-roads of the
north,
(*Don John of Austria is girt and going forth*).
Where the grey seas glitter and the sharp tides shift
And the sea-folk labour and the red sails lift.
He shakes his lance of iron and he claps his wings of
stone;
The noise is gone through Normandy; the noise is gone
alone;
The North is full of tangled things and texts and aching
eyes
And dead is all the innocence of anger and surprise,
And Christian killeth Christian in a narrow dusty
room,
And Christian dreadeth Christ that hath a newer face of
doom,
And Christian hateth Mary that God kissed in Galilee,
But Don John of Austria is riding to the sea.
Don John calling through the blast and the eclipse
Crying with the trumpet, with the trumpet of his lips,
Trumpet that sayeth hal
Domino Gloria!
Don John of Austria,
Is shouting to the ships.

King Philip's in his closet with the Fleece about his neck,
(*Don John of Austria is armed upon the deck*).

The walls are hung with velvet that is black and soft as
sin,

And little dwarfs creep out of it and little dwarfs creep in.
He holds a crystal phial that has colours like the moon,
He touches, and it tingles, and he trembles very soon,
And his face is as a fungus of a leprous white and grey
Like plants in the high houses that are shuttered from
the day,

And death is in the phial at the end of noble work,
But Don John of Austria has fired upon the Turk.

Don John's hunting, and his hounds have bayed—
Booms away past Italy the rumour of his raid.

Gun upon gun, hal hal

Gun upon gun, hurrah!

Don John of Austria

Has loosed the cannonade.

The Pope was in his chapel before day or battle broke,
(*Don John of Austria is hidden in the smoke*).

The hidden room in man's house where God sits all the
year,

The secret window whence the world looks small and
very dear.

He sees as in a mirror on the monstrous twilight sea
The crescent of the cruel ships whose name is mystery;
They fling great shadows foe-wards, making Cross and
Castle dark,

They veil the plumed lions on the galleys of St. Mark;
And above the ships are palaces of brown, black-bearded
chiefs,
And below the ships are prisons, where with multi-
tudinous griefs,
Christian captives sick and sunless, all a labouring race
repines
Like a race in sunken cities, like a nation in the mines.
They are lost like slaves that sweat, and in the skies of
morning hung
The stairways of the tallest gods when tyranny was young.

They are countless, voiceless, hopeless as those fallen or
fleeing on
Before the high Kings' horses in the granite of Babylon.
And many a one grows witless in his quiet room in hell
Where a yellow face looks inward through the lattice of
his cell,
And he finds his God forgotten, and he seeks no more a
sign—

(But Don John of Austria has burst the battle-line!)

Don John pounding from the slaughter-painted poop
Purpling all the ocean like a bloody pirate's sloop,
Scarlet running over on the silvers and the golds,
Breaking of the hatches up, and bursting of the holds
Thronging of the thousands up that labour under sea
White for bliss and blind for sun and stunned for liberty.
Vivat Hispania!
Domino Gloria!

Don John of Austria
Has set his people free!

Cervantes on his galley sets the sword back in the sheath,
(*Don John of Austria rides homeward with a wreath*).
And he sees across a weary land a straggling road in
Spain,
Up which a lean and foolish knight for ever rides in
vain,
And he smiles, but not as Sultans smile, and settles back
the blade . . .
(*But Don John of Austria rides home from the Crusade.*)

G. K. CHESTERTON.

THE END OF THE WORLD

The snow had fallen many nights and days;
The sky was come upon the earth at last,
Sifting thinly down as endlessly
As though within the system of blind planets
Something had been forgot or overdriven.
The dawn now seemed neglected in the grey
Where mountains were unbuilt and shadowless trees
Rootlessly paused or hung upon the air.
There was no wind, but now and then a sigh
Crossed that dry falling dust and sifted it
Through crevices of slate and door and casement.
Perhaps the new moon's time was even past.

Outside, the first white twilights were too void
Until a sheep called once, as to a lamb,
And tenderness crept everywhere from it;
But now the flock must have strayed far away.
The lights across the valley must be veiled,
The smoke lost in the greyness or the dusk.
For more than three days now the snow had thatched
That cow-house roof where it had ever melted
With yellow stains from the beasts' breath inside;
But yet a dog howled there, though not quite lately.
Someone passed down the valley swift and singing,
Yes, with locks spreaded like a son of morning;
But if he seemed too tall to be a man
It was that men had been so long unseen,
Or shapes loom larger through a moving snow.
And he was gone and food had not been given him.
When snow slid from an overweighted leaf,
Shaking the tree, it might have been a bird
Slipping in sleep or shelter, whirring wings;
Yet never bird fell out, save once a dead one—
And in two days the snow had covered it.
The dog had howled again—or thus it seemed
Until a lean fox passed and cried no more.
All was so safe indoors where life went on
Glad of the close enfolding snow—O glad
To be so safe and secret at its heart,
Watching the strangeness of familiar things.
They knew not what dim hours went on, went by,
For while they slept the clock stopt newly wound

As the cold hardened. Once they watched the road,
Thinking to be remembered. Once they doubted
If they had kept the sequence of the days,
Because they heard not any sound of bells. °
A butterfly, that hid until the Spring
Under a ceiling's shadow, dropt, was dead.
The coldness seemed more nigh, the coldness deepened
As a sound deepens into silences;
It was of earth and came not by the air;
The earth was cooling and drew down the sky.
The air was crumbling. There was no more sky.
Rails of a broken bed charred in the grate,
And when he touched the bars he thought the sting
Came from their heat—he could not feel such cold. . . .
She said, "O, do not sleep,
Heart, heart of me, keep near me. No, no; sleep.
I will not lift his fallen, quiet eyelids,
Although I know he would awaken then—
He closed them thus but now of his own will.
He can stay with me while I do not lift them."

GORDON BOTTOMLEY.

III. Reflections

IN LADY STREET

All day long the traffic goes
In Lady Street by dingy rows
Of sloven houses, tattered shops—
Fried fish, old clothes and fortune-tellers—
Tall trams on silver-shining rails,
With grinding wheels and swaying tops,
And lorries with their corded bales,
And screeching cars. “Buy, buy,” the sellers
Of rags and bones and sickening meat
Cry all day long in Lady Street.

And when the sunshine has its way
In Lady Street, then all the grey
Dull desolation grows in state
More dull and grey and desolate,
And the sun is a shamefast thing,
A lord not comely-housed, a god
Seeing what gods must blush to see,

A song where it is ill to sing,
And each gold ray despitiously
Lies like a gold ironic rod.

Yet one grey man in Lady Street
Looks for the sun. He never bent
Life to his will, his travelling feet
Have scaled no cloudy continent,
Nor has the sickle-hand been strong.
He lives in Lady Street; a bed,
Four cobwebbed walls.

But all day long
A time is singing in his head
Of youth in Gloucester lanes. He hears
The wind among the barley-blades,
The tapping of the woodpeckers
On the smooth beeches, thistle-spades
Slicing the sinewy roots; he sees
The hooded filberts in the copse
Beyond the loaded orchard trees,
The netted avenues of hops;
He smells the honeysuckle thrown
Along the hedge. He lives alone,
Alone—yet not alone, for sweet
Are Gloucester lanes in Lady Street.

Aye, Gloucester lanes. For down below
The cobwebbed room this grey man plies

A trade, a coloured trade. A show
Of many-coloured merchandise
Is in his shop. Brown filberts there,
And apples red with Gloucester air,
And cauliflowers he keeps, and round
Smooth marrows grown on Gloucester ground,
Fat cabbages and yellow plums,
And gaudy brave chrysanthemums.
And times a glossy pheasant lies
Among his store, not Tyrian dyes
More rich than are the neck-feathers;
And times a prize of violets,
Or dewy mushrooms satin-skinned,
And times an unfamiliar wind
Robbed of its woodland favour stirs
Gay daffodils this grey man sets
Among his treasure.

All day long

In Lady Street the traffic goes
By dingy houses, desolate rows
Of shops that stare like hopeless eyes.
Day long the sellers cry their cries,
The fortune-tellers tell no wrong
Of lives that know not any right,
And drift, that has not even the will
To drift, toils through the day until
The wage of sleep is won at night.
But this grey man heeds not at all

The hell of Lady Strcet. His stall
Of many-coloured merchandise
He makes a shining paradise,
As all day long chrysanthemums
He sells, and red and yellow plums
And cauliflowers. In that one spot
Of Lady Street the sun is not
Ashamed to shine and send a rare
Shower of colour through the air;
The grey man says the sun is sweet
On Gloucster lanes in Lady Street.

JOHN DRINKWATER.

THE DRYAD

What hath the ilex heard,
What hath the laurel seen,
That the pale edges of their leaves are stirred?
What spirit stole between?
O trees upon your circle of smooth green,
You stir as youths when beauty paces by,
Moving heart and eye
To unuttered praise.
Was it the wind that parted your light boughs,
Some odour to recapture as he strays,
Or some fair virgin shape of human brows
Yet lost to human gaze?

O for that morning of the simple world,
When hollow oak and fount and flowering reed
Were storied each with glimpses of a face
By dropping hair dew-pearled!
Strange eyes that had no heed
Of men, and bodies shy with the firm grace
Of young fawns flying, yet of human kin,
Whose hand might lead us, could we only spare
Doubt and suspicious pride, a world to win,
Where all that lives would speak with us, now dumb
For fear of us. O may I yet win there!
Wave, boughs, aside! to your fresh glooms I come.

But all is lonely here!
Yet lonelier is the glade
Than the wood's entrance, and more dark appear
The hollows of still shade.
Ah, yet the nymph's white feet have surely strayed
Beside the spring; how solitary fair
Shines and trembles there
White narcissus bloom!
By lichen'd grey stones, where the glancing stream
Swerves over into green wet mossy gloom,
Their snowy frail flames on the ripple gleam
And all the place illumine.

Surely her feet a moment rested here!
Nerving her hand upon a pliant branch,
She paused, she listened, and then glided on

Half-turned in lovely fear;
And her young shoulders shone
Like moonbeams that wet sands, foam-bordered, blanch,
A sight to stay the beating of the breast!
Alas, but mortal eyes may never know
That beauty. Hark, what bird above his nest
So rapturously sings? Ah, thou wilt tell,
Thou perfect flower, whither her footsteps go,
And all her thoughts, pure flower, for thou know'st well.

White sweetness, richest odours round thee cling.
Purely thou breathest of voluptuous Spring.
Thou art so white, because thou dost enclose
All the advancing splendours of the year;
And thou hast burned beyond the reddest rose,
To shine so keenly clear.
Shadowed within thy radiance I divine
Frail coral tinges of the anemone,
Dim blue that clouds upon the columbine,
And wallflower's glow as of old, fragrant wine,
And the first tulip's sanguine clarity,
And pansy's midnight-purple of sole star!
All these that wander far
From thee, and wilder glories would assume
Ev'n the proud peony of drooping plume,
Robed like a queen in Tyre.
All to thy lost intensity aspire:
Toward thee they yearn out of encroaching gloom;
They are all faltering beams of thy most perfect fire!

And she, that only haunts remote green ways,
Is it an empty freedom she doth praise?
Doth she, distrustfully averse, despise
The common sweet of passion, apt to fault?
And turns she from the hunger in love's eyes
Pale famine to exalt?
Oh no, her bosom's maiden hope is still
A morning dewdrop, imaging complete
All life, full-stored with every generous thrill;
No hope less perfect could her body fill,
Nor she be false to her own heart's rich beat.
But she is pure because she has not soiled
Hope with endeavour foiled;
She not condemns glad love, but with the best
Enshrines it, lovelier because unpossessed.
Where is the joy we meant
In our first love, the joy so swiftly spent?
It glows for ever in her sacred breast,
Untamed to languor's ebb, nor by hot passion rent.

O pure abstaining Priestess of delight,
That treasures apart love's sanctity,
Art thou but vision of an antique dream,
Mated with a song's flight,
With beckoning western gleam
Or first rose fading from an early sky?
Yet we, that are of earth, must seek on earth
Our bodied bliss. Nay, thou hast still thine hour;
And in a girl's life-trusting April mirth

Or noble boy's clear and victorious eyes
Thou shinest with the charm and with the power
Of all that wisdom loses to be wise.

LAURENCE BINYON.

SNAKE

A snake came to my water-trough
On a hot, hot day, and I in pyjamas for the heat,
To drink there.

In the deep, strange-scented shade of the great dark
carob tree
I came down the steps with my pitcher
And must wait, must stand and wait, for there he was
at the trough before me.

He reached down from a fissure in the earth-wall in the
gloom
And trailed his yellow-brown slackness soft-bellied down
over the edge of the stone trough
And rested his throat upon the stone bottom,
And where the water had dripped from the tap, in a
small clearness,
He sipped with his straight mouth,
Softly drank through his straight gums, into his slack
long body.
Silently.

Someone was before me at my water-trough,
And I, like a second-comer, waiting.

He lifted his head from his drinking, as cattle do,
And looked at me vaguely, as drinking cattle do,
And flickered his two-forked tongue from his lips, and
mused a moment,
And stooped and drank a little more,
Being earth-brown, earth-golden from the burning
bowels of the earth
On the day of Sicilian July, with Etna smoking.

The voice of my education said to me
He must be killed,
For in Sicily the black, black snakes are innocent, the
gold are venomous.
And voices in me said, If you were a man
You would take a stick and break him now, and finish
him off.

But must I confess how I liked him,
How glad I was he had come like a guest in quiet, to
drink at my water-trough
And depart peaceful, pacified, and thankless,
Into the burning bowels of this earth?

Was it cowardice, that I dared not kill him?
Was it perversity, that I longed to talk to him?
Was it humility, to feel honoured?
I felt so honoured.

And yet those voices:

If you were not afraid you would kill him.

And truly I was afraid, I was most afraid,

But even so, honoured still more

That he should seek my hospitality

From out the dark door of the secret earth.

He drank enough

And lifted his head, dreamily, as one who has drunken,

And flickered his tongue like a forked night on the air
so black,

Seemed to lick his lips,

And looked around like a god, unseeing, into the air,

And slowly turned his head,

And slowly, very slowly, as if thrice adream,

Proceeded to draw his slow length curving round

And climb again the broken bank of my wall-face.

And as he put his head into that dreadful hole,

And as he slowly drew up, snake-easing his shoulders,
and entered further,

A sort of horror, a sort of protest against his withdrawing
into that horrid black hole,

Deliberately going into the blackness, and slowly drawing
himself after,

Overcame me now his back was turned.

I looked round, I put down my pitcher,

I picked up a clumsy log

And threw it at the water-trough with a clatter

I think it did not hit him,
But suddenly that part of him that was left behind
 convulsed in undignified haste,
Writhed like lightning, and was gone
Into the black hole, the earth-lipped fissure in the
 wall-front,
At which, in the intense still noon, I stared with fascination.

And immediately I regretted it.
I thought how paltry, how vulgar, what a mean act!
I despised myself and the voices of my accursed human
 education.

And I thought of the albatross,
And I wished he would come back, my snake.
For he seemed to me again like a king,
Like a king in exile, uncrowned in the underworld,
Now due to be crowned again.

And so, I missed my chance with one of the lords
Of life.
And I have something to expiate:
A pettiness.

D. H. LAWRENCE.

EVERY THING

Since man has been articulate,
Mechanical, improvidently wise,
(Servant of Fate),
He has not understood the little cries
And foreign conversations of the small
Delightful creatures that have followed him
Not far behind;
Has failed to hear the sympathetic call
Of Crockery and Cutlery, those kind
Reposeful Teraphim
Of his domestic happiness; the Stool
He sat on, or the Door he entered through:
He has not thanked them, overbearing fool!
What is he coming to?

But you should listen to the talk of these.
Honest they are, and patient they have kept,
Served him without his *Thank you* or his *Please*. . . .
I often heard
The gentle Bed, a sigh between each word,
Murmuring, before I slept.
The Candle, as I blew it, cried aloud
Then bowed,
And in a smoky argument
Into the darkness went.

The Kettle puffed a tentacle of breath:—
“ Pooh! I have boiled his water, I don’t know
Why; and he always says I boil too slow.
He never calls me ‘ Sukie, dear,’ and oh,
I wonder why I squander my desire
Sitting submissive on his kitchen fire.”

Now the old Copper Basin suddenly
Rattled and tumbled from the shelf,
Bumping and crying: “ I can fall by myself;
Without a woman’s hand
To patronize and coax and flatter me,
I understand
The lean and poise of gravitable land.”
It gave a raucous and tumultuous shout,
Twisted itself convulsively about,
Rested upon the floor, and, while I stare,
It stares and grins at me.
The old impetuous Gas above my head
Begins irascibly to flare and fret,
Whczzing into its epileptic jet,
Reminding me I ought to go to bed.

The Rafters creak; an Empty-Cupboard door
Swings open; now a wild Plank of the floor
Breaks from its joist, and leaps behind my foot.
Down from the chimney half a pound of Soot
Tumbles, and lies, and shakes itself again.
The Putty cracks against the window-pane.

A piece of Paper in the basket shoves
Another piece, and toward the bottom moves.
My independent Pencil, while I write,
Breaks at the point: the ruminating Clock
Stirs all its body and begins to rock,
Warning the waiting presence of the Night,
Strikes the dead hour, and tumbles to the plain
Ticking of ordinary work again.

You do well to remind me, and I praise
Your strangely individual foreign ways.
You call me from myself to recognize
Companionship in your unselfish eyes.
I want your dear acquaintances, although
I pass you arrogantly over, throw
Your lovely sounds, and squander them along
My busy days. I'll do you no more wrong.

Purr for me, Sukie, like a faithful cat.
You, my well trampled Boots, and you, my Hat,
Remain my friends: I feel, though I don't speak,
Your touch grow kindlier from week to week.
It well becomes our mutual happiness
To go toward the same end more or less.
There is not much dissimilarity,
Not much to choose, I know it well, in fine,
Between the purposes of you and me,
And your eventual Rubbish Heap, and mine.

HAROLD MONRO.

A BALLAD OF NURSERY RHYME

Strawberries that in gardens grow
Are plump and juicy fine,
But sweeter far as wise men know
Spring from the woodland vine.

No need for bowl or silver spoon,
Sugar or spice or cream,
Has the wild berry plucked in June
Beside the trickling stream.

One such to melt at the tongue's root
Confounding taste with scent,
Beats a full peck of garden fruit:
Which points my argument.

May sudden justice overtake
And snap the froward pen,
That old and palsied poets shake
Against the minds of men;

Blasphemers trusting to hold caught
In far-flung webs of ink
The utmost ends of human thought,
Till nothing's left to think.

But may the gift of heavenly peace
And glory for all time
Keep the boy Tom who, tending geese,
First made the nursery rhyme.

By the brookside one August day,
Using the sun for clock,
Tom whiled the languid hours away
Beside his scattering flock,

Carving with a sharp pointed stone
On a broad slab of slate
The famous lives of Jumping Joan,
Dan Fox and Greedy Kate;

Rhyming of wolves and bears and birds,
Spain, Scotland, Babylon,
That sister Kate might learn the words
To tell to Toddlng John.

But Kate, who could not stay content
To learn her lesson pat,
New beauty to the rough lines lent
By changing this or that;

And she herself set fresh things down
In corners of her slate,
Of lambs and lanes and London Town.
God's blessing fall on Kate!

The baby loved the simple sound,
With jolly glee he shook,
And soon the lines grew smooth and round
Like pebbles in Tom's brook,

From mouth to mouth told and retold
By children sprawled at ease
Before the fire in winter's cold,
In June beneath tall trees;

Till though long lost are stone and slate,
Though the brook no more runs,
And dead long time are Tom, John, Kate,
Their sons and their sons' sons;

Yet, as when Time with stealthy tread
Lays the rich garden waste,
The woodland berry ripe and red
Fails not in scent or taste,

So these same rhymes shall still be told
To children yet unborn,
While false philosophy growing old
Fades and is killed by scorn.

ROBERT GRAVES.

THE BIRDS

Within mankind's duration, so they say,
Khephren and Ninus lived but yesterday.
Asia had no name till man was old
And long had learned the use of iron and gold;
And æons had passed, when the first corn was planted
Since first the use of syllables was granted.

Men were on earth while climates slowly swung,
Fanning wide zones to heat and cold, and long
Subsidence turned great continents to sea,
And seas dried up, dried up interminably,
Age after age; enormous seas were dried
Amid wastes of land. And the last monsters died.

Earth wore another face. O since that prime
Man with how many works has sprinkled time!
Hammering, hewing, digging tunnels, roads;
Building ships, temples, multiform abodes.

How for his body's appetites, his toils
Have conquered all earth's products, all her soils;
And in what thousand thousand shapes of art
He has tried to find a language for his heart!

Never at rest, never content or tired:
Insatiate wanderer, marvellously fired,

Most grandly piling and piling into the air
Stones that will topple or arch he knows not where.

And yet did I, this spring, think it more strange,
More grand, more full of awe, than all that change,
And lovely and sweet and touching unto tears,
That through man's chronicled and unchronicled years
And even into that unguessable beyond,
The water-hen has nested by a pond,
Weaving dry flags, into a beaten floor,
The one sure product of her only lore.
Low on a ledge above the shadowed water
Then, when she heard no men, as Nature taught her,
Plashing around with busy scarlet bill
She built her nest, her nest, and builds it still.

O let your strong imagination turn
The great wheel backward, until Troy unburn,
And then unbuild, and seven Troys below
Rise out of death, and dwindle, and outflow,
Till all have passed, and none has yet been there:
Back, ever back. Our birds still crossed the air;
Beyond our myriad changing generations
Still built, unchanged, their known inhabitations.
A million years before Atlantis was
Our lark sprang from some hollow in the grass,
Some old soft hoof-print in a tussock's shade;
And the wood-pigeon's smooth snow-white eggs were
laid

High, amid green pines' sunset-coloured shafts,
And rooks their villages of twiggy rafts
Set on the tops of elms, where elms grew then,
And still the thumbling tit and perky wren
Popped through the tiny doors of cosy balls
And the blackbird lined with moss his high-built walls;
A round mud cottage held the thrush's young,
And straws from the untidy sparrow's hung.
And, skimming forktailed in the evening air,
When man first was were not the martens there?
Did not those birds some human shelter crave,
And stow beneath the cornice of his cave
Their dry tight cups of clay? And from each door
Peeped on a morning wiseheads three or four.

Yes, daw and owl, curlew and crested hern,
Kingfisher, mallard, water-rail and tern,
Chaffinch and greenfinch, warbler, stonechat, ruff,
Pied wagtail, robin, fly-catcher and chough,
Missel-thrush, magpie, sparrow-hawk, and jay,
Built, those far ages gone, in this year's way.
And the first man who walked the cliffs of Rame,
As I this year, looked down and saw the same
Blotches of rusty red on ledge and cleft
With grey-green spots on them, while right and left
A dizzying tangle of gulls were floating and flying,
Wheeling and crossing and darting, crying and crying,
Circling and crying, over and over and over,
Crying with swoop and hover and fall and recover.

And below on a rock against the grey sea fretted,
Pipe-necked and stationary and silhouetted,
Cormorants stood in a wise, black, equal row
'Above the nests and long blue eggs we know.

O delicate chain over all ages stretched,
O dumb tradition from what far darkness fetched:
Each little architect with its one design
Perpetual, fixed and right in stuff and line,
Each little ministrant who knows one thing,
One learned rite to celebrate the spring.
Whatever alters else on sea or shore,
These are unchanging: man must still explore.

J. C. SQUIRE.

RETROGRESSION

Our daughters flower in vernal grace;
In strength our striplings wax apace;
Our cities teem; our commerce rides
Sovereign upon the fawning tides.
But while, to this our stronghold—where
The North Wind's wandering children fair,
Like wild birds from the waters sprung,
Built their wild nest and reared their young—
The fleets of peace for ever pour
Fruitage and vintage, gems and ore;
While here, within each ocean gate,

Long barricadoed against Fate,
We are served by all the alien seas,
And fed from the Antipodes,
Lo, everywhere the unplenished brain!
Everywhere, dire as bondman's chain,
Or laws that crush, or creeds that blind,
The leanness of the unnourished mind.

For few and fewer do they grow,
Who know, or ever cared to know,
The great things greatly said and sung
In this heroic English tongue,
This speech that is the rough-wrought key
To palaces of wizardry,
And many a fabric hung in air,
Our fathers' glory and our despair,
That firmer stands than boastful stone;
And many a tower of vigil lone,
Climbing whose stairway Wisdom viewed
The labyrinth of infinitude.

And shouldst thou have in thee to-day
Aught thou canst better sing than say,
Shun, if thou wouldst by men be heard,
The comely phrase, the well-born word,
And use, as for their ears more meet,
The loose-lipped lingo of the street,
A language Milton's kin have long
Accounted good enough for song.

Or don that vesture doubly vile,
The beaded and bespangled style—
Diction o'erloaded and impure,
Thy thought lost in its garniture,
Thy Muse, ev'n to her raiment's hem,
Huddling uncostly gem on gem
Striving her lax form to bestar
With all crude ornaments that are:
An empty and a dreary strife,
Vulgar in Letters as in Life.

Nor look for praise, save here and there
From a fast-dwindling remnant rare,
If thou beget with happy pain
The ordered and the governed strain
That peradventure had not shamed
Masters felicitously famed;
Dryden, the athlete large and strong,
Lord of the nerve and sinew of song;
A hewer and shaper who could see
In adamant, plasticity;
Who tore from the entrails of the mine
The metal of his iron line,
And, born beside the haughty tomb
Of that rank time of overbloom
When poets vied in gathering each
Full-blossomed apple and buxom peach
That odorous in the orchard burned,
Had, from their purple surfeit, learned

The truth in Hellas seen so plain,
That the art of arts *is to refrain*;—
Or Gray, who on worn thoughts conferred
That second youth, the perfect word,
The elected and predestined phrase
That had lain bound, long nights and days,
To wear at last, when once set free,
Immortal pellucidity;
And who, in that most mighty Ode,
That like a pageant streamed and glowed,
Called up anew mid breathing things
The great ghosts of our tragic Kings,
With doom-dark brows to come and go,
Trailing the folds of gorgeous woe.

WILLIAM WATSON.

WHEN I WENT TO THE CIRCUS

When I went to the circus that had pitched on the
waste lot

it was full of uneasy people
frightened of the bare earth and the temporary canvas
and the smell of horses and other beasts
instead of merely the smell of man.

Monkeys rode rather grey and wizened
on curly plump piebald ponies
and the children uttered a little cry—

and dogs jumped through hoops and turned somersaults
and then the geese scuttled in in a little flock
and round the ring they went to the sound of the whip
then doubled, and back, with a funny up-flutter of
wings—

and the children suddenly shouted out.

Then came the hush again, like a hush of fear.

The tight-rope lady, pink and blonde and nude-looking,
with a few gold spangles
footed cautiously out on the rope, turned prettily, spun
round
bowed, and lifted her foot in her hand, smiled, swung
her parasol
to another balance, tripped round, poised, and slowly
sank
her handsome thighs down, down, till she slept her
splendid body on the rope.
When she rose, tilting her parasol, and smiled at the
cautious people
they cheered, but nervously.

The trapeze man, slim and beautiful and like a fish in
the air
swung great curves through the upper space, and came
down like a star.
—And the people applauded, with hollow, frightened
applause.

The elephants, huge and grey, loomed their curved bulk
through the dusk
and sat up, taking strange postures, showing the pink
soles of their feet
and curling their precious live trunks like ammonites
and moving always with soft slow precision
as when a great ship moves to anchor.
The people watched and wondered, and seemed to
resent the mystery that lies in beasts.

Horses, gay horses, swirling round and plaiting
in a long line, their heads laid over each other's necks;
they were happy, they enjoyed it;
all the creatures seemed to enjoy the game
in the circus, with their circus people.

But the audience, compelled to wonder
compelled to admire the bright rhythms of moving
bodies
compelled to see the delicate skill of flickering human
bodies
flesh flamey and a little heroic, even in a tumbling
clown,
they were not really happy.
There was no gushing response, as there is at the film.

When modern people see the carnal body dauntless
and flickering gay

playing among the elements neatly, beyond competition
and displaying no personality,
modern people are depressed.

Modern people feel themselves at a disadvantage.
They know they have no bodies that could play among
the elements.

They have only their personalities, that are best seen
flat, on the film,
flat personalities in two dimensions, imponderable and
touchless.

And they grudge the circus people the swooping gay
weight of limbs
that flower in mere movement,
and they grudge them the immediate, physical under-
standing they have with their circus beasts,
and they grudge them their circus-life altogether.

Yet the strange, almost frightened shout of delight that
comes now and then from the children
shows that the children vaguely know how cheated they
are of their birthright
in the bright wild circus flesh.

D. H. LAWRENCE.

SONG OF THE LARKS AT DAWN

Shepherds who pastures seek
At dawn may see
From Falterona's peak
Above Camaldoli
Gleam, beyond forests and wildernesses bleak,
Both shores of Italy.
Fallen apart are the terrible clouds of the morning
And men lift up their eyes.

Heaven's troubled continents
Are rifted, torn:
Thunders, in their forest tents,
Still seethe and sullenly mourn
When aloft, from the gulfs and the sheer ascents,
Is a music born.
Hark to the music, laggard mists of the morning,
And men, lift up your eyes!

For scarce can eye see light
When the ear's aware
That virginals exquisite
Are raining from the air—
With sun and pale moon mingling their delight—
Adorations everywhere!
Now listen and yield the vanquish'd stars of the morning
And men lift up their eyes.

Eddy of golden dust—
Halo of rays—
Thrilling up, up, as they must
Die of the life they praise—
The larks, the larks! that to the earth entrust
Only their sleeping-place.
From rugged wolds and rock-bound valleys of morning
The larks like mist arise.

Earth sends them up from hills,
Her wishes small,
Her clouds of griefs, her wills
To burst from her own thrall,
And to burn away what chains the soul or chills
In the God and fount of all.
Open your gates, O ye cities faint for morning,
And men, lift up your eyes!

Open! Night's blue Pantheon,
Thy dark roof-ring
For that escaping pæan
Of tremblers on the wing
At the unknown threshold of the empyrean
In myriads soft to sing.
Give way before them, temple-veils of the morning,
And men, lift up your eyes!

They ascend, ere the red beam
On heaven grows strong,

Into that amazing stream
Of Dawn—and float along
In the future, for the future is their dream
* Who roof the world with song.
Open your flowers, O ye mountains spread for morning
And men, lift up your eyes!

Hark! it grows less and less—
But nothing mars
That rapture beyond guess—
Beyond our senses' bars—
They drink the virgin Light, the measureless,
And in it fade, like stars.
They have gone past, the dew-like spirits of morning
Beyond the uplifted eyes.

Between two lamps suspended,
Of Life and Death,
Sun-marshalled and moon-tended
Man's swift soul journeyeth
To be borne out of the life it hath transcended
Still, still on a breath! . . .
To-day we too are the wingèd songs of the morning,
To-day we will arise!

HERBERT TRENCH.

NOTES

There is a Hill

myosote. From Gk. *Muosotis*, meaning literally 'mouse ear'. A genus of herbs including the common forget-me-not, which plant is probably here intended.

nenuphars. From Arab. and Pers. *niufar* or *ninufar*, meaning probably the blue lotus. Here stands for the white or yellow water-lily.

gibbous. From Lat. *gibbus*, 'humped'. The moon is said to be 'gibbous' between half-moon and full, when both limbs are convex.

A Lesson to my Ghost

sock. From Lat. *soccus*, a kind of low-heeled light shoe. Such shoes were worn by actors of comedy in ancient Greece and Rome and have come, metaphorically, to stand for comedy itself.

lych-gate. 'Lych' is descended from the Old English word for 'body' or 'corpse', and the lych-gate is the covered gate leading into a churchyard where the bier is placed, before a funeral, to await the clergyman.

Night Rhapsody

dispansion. An old word meaning the same as 'expansion', and now obsolete in prose.

Streets

Cimmerian. The Cimmerians were a people described by Homer as living in a distant land of mist and gloom. Hence the adjective from their name suggests darkness.

The Child and the Mariner

Argostoli. A small town on the island of Cephalonia off the west coast of Greece.

Cephalonia's sea. The Ionian Sea.

volcano Martinique. Mont Pelée on the island of Martinique in the West Indies.

The Passing of the Farmer

Clamps. Heaps of produce, such as potatoes, covered over to prevent freezing.

Orpheus

Stygian tide. The Styx was a stream encircling the Greek Hades seven times. Every spirit entering Hades was obliged to cross it and might not return.

Eumenides. Lit., 'the kindly people'. A term for the Greek Furies, which, by speaking pleasantly of them, was meant to avert their terrors.

Lethe. The river of forgetfulness encircling Hades, in crossing which the spirits of the dead forgot their home and kindred.

The Gift of Harun Al-Rashid

Byzantium. The name, during ancient and mediæval times, of the city now called Constantinople.

Sappho's song. All but fragments of the love-poetry of Sappho, the famous Greek poetess of Lesbos in the sixth century B.C., has been lost, but all her work was probably extant in the eighth century A.D. when Harun Al-Rashid ruled Bagdad and its empire.

Parmenides. A Greek philosopher of Elca in Lucania and counted as the greatest of the Eleatic school. In his one work *On Nature*, a didactic poem, he demonstrates the reality but unknowability of Absolute Being, which is rather Thought than Deity. The court of Harun was full of Greek scholars, and Greek literature and philosophy were profoundly studied there.

Vizir Jaffer. The close friend and constant companion of Harun. As Vizir, or chief minister, of Harun, he governed

with great ability and success the empire of the Abbasids and yet was slain, along with all his house save one, by Harun in an inexplicable fit of hatred.

two contemplating passions. The love of Kusta Ben Luka and the love of the mysteries of his studies which surrounded him are the two passions in the girl which together 'contemplated' him, i.e. made him the object of their absorbed attention, and hence gave the girl intuitive insight into the mysteries which were his study.

Djinn. Spirits of immense power and generally monstrous size who play a large part in the magical actions of the "Arabian Nights".

Forty Singing Seamen

Mogadore. A port on the coast of Morocco, N.W. Africa.

Polyphemus. The one-eyed giant from whose hands and jaws Ulysses delivered his seamen during their voyage.

Prester John. A mythical Christian king who, in the Middle Ages, was supposed to rule over a large domain somewhere in Asia. 'Prester' is a form of 'priest'.

The Paphian Ball

quire and viols. 'Quire' is the archaic spelling of 'choir'. By 'viols' is meant stringed instruments of the type of the violin.

lute. A seven-stringed instrument with a body like a mandoline but with neck bent back, played by plucking the strings with the fingers. It is Oriental in origin and was much favoured in Europe from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century.

Colomen

press-gang. A detachment of men employed, in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, under the command of an officer empowered to force men into military and, especially, naval service.

Lepanto

Lepanto, fought on Oct. 7, 1571, was a decisive victory of Christian forces—Papal, Spanish, and Venetian—commanded by Don John of Austria, over the Turks.

Lion of the Sea. Venice, which, having St Mark as its patron saint, carried the lion—symbolic of the second evangelist—on its banner and, being a great sea-power, was called the "Lion of the Sea".

cold Queen of England. Queen Elizabeth
shadow of the Valois. The house of Valois ruled France from 1328 to 1589. By "the shadow of the Valois" is meant the then reigning French king, Charles IX, who had none of the religious faith or conquering energy of his predecessors.

a crownless prince. Don John was illegitimate and had no realms.

Mahound. A mediæval form of the name Mahomet.

Black Azrael and Ariel and Ammon. Azrael, according to Jewish and Mohammedan legend, is the angel of death who separates the soul from the body. Ariel is a water-spirit in ancient and mediæval demonology. Ammon was originally one of the chief gods of Egypt. All these spirits are here regarded as angels subject to the power of Mahomet in Paradise.

Giaours. Turkish name for non-Mohammedans, especially Christians. It means 'unbeliever'.

Kismet. The Mohammedan name for Fate, or the incidents and details of a man's lot in life. The word is Turkish, coming from an Arabic word meaning 'to divide'.

Richard, Raymond, Godfrey. Richard I of England, Raymond, and Godfrey of the famous Norman house of Hauteville were mighty crusaders of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries against the Mohammedans for the recovery of the Holy Land for the Christians.

King Philip. Philip II of Spain.

the Fleece. The highest decoration and honour in the gift of the King of Spain was the Order of the Golden Fleece.
galleys of St. Mark. The Venetian galleys.

Cervantes. The great Spanish creator of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza fought at Lepanto and lost an arm during the battle.

In Lady Street

Lady Street. The original of this street is supposed to be Gooch Street in Birmingham.

shamefast. The earlier form of the word now altered, by false etymology, to 'shamefaced' 'Shamefast' meant 'modest' Here, perhaps, the meanings of both 'shamefaced' and 'shamefast' are intended to be mingled

• **Tyrian dyes.** Tyre, the ancient Phœnician port, was famous for a purple dye made from a shell-fish raised from the depths of the sea near it

The Dryad

The morning of the simple world. The early world of Greece, when the popular imagination created nature spirits—hamadryads to inhabit trees, naiads the fountains, and Syrinx the reeds

Snake

the albatross. Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" is largely built on the old belief that to kill an albatross brought ill-luck to a ship So here the attempt to kill another animal, the snake, out of superstitious dread, brings to the poet's mind the thought of the albatross, whose life was fortunate to men but whose killing destroyed them.

Every Thing

Teraphim. Originally idols or an idol used in divination

A Ballad of Nursery Rhyme

Dan Fox. 'Dan' or 'daun' (Lat *dominus*) is a Middle English word meaning 'lord', and in mediæval times was applied humorously to animals in beast-stories and poems

The Birds

Khephren and Ninus. Gods of the ancient Egyptians
seven Troys below. Two generations ago, Schliemann dug up the hill of Hissarlik, where he believed Troy to have stood He found remains of many cities, one under the other, and one of them burnt He believed the burnt one to be the Troy of Homer, and the seven Troys under it to be earlier cities whose history must have run back many hundred years earlier still.

Atlantis. A mythical island of which Plato speaks in the *Phædrus* as having existed 900 years earlier than Solon.

Retrogression

North Wind's wandering children. The Angles and Saxons and, later, the Danes are meant, since they were sea-nomads and came from the north.

that most mighty Ode. "The Bard."

When I went to the Circus

ammonites. A species of fossil shells having a flat spiral form like that of the nautilus.

Song of the Larks at Dawn

Falterona's peak . . . Camaldoli. Monte Falterona is a peak of the Tuscan Apennines almost overhanging Camaldoli, where is an ancient and famous monastery, in the neighbourhood of Florence.

virginals. A small rectangular spinet, without legs, having only one wire to a note. Called by this name because it was used by young girls. It was popular in England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Here is meant light tinkling music such as virginals and larks alike produce.

Pantheon. The temple of 'all the gods' built in Rome by the Emperor Hadrian about A.D. 120. It is notable for its immense dome, covering the whole temple. Here, in the poem, the earth is felt to be the floor of a temple, the night sky its dome, and this imaginative picture is further developed by the "threshold of the empyrean" (where the popular Greek religion believed the gods dwelt) and the "temple-veils of the morning".

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